



General Assembly

Seventy-second session

21st plenary meeting
Saturday, 23 September 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Tevi (Vanuatu),
Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Osman Mohammed Saleh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea.

Mr. Saleh (Eritrea): It is another year and another session of the General Assembly. We meet in the same Assembly Hall and deliver our addresses from the same rostrum, yet no modicum of protocol can mask the gaping divide in our ranks. We live in an increasingly fragile, unjust and unequal world. A small minority holds the reins of power and wealth among nations and, for the most part, within nations. The overwhelming majority of nations and their citizens are without power, without voice, without the means for a decent life, and often without peace and security. We may be called the United Nations, but the reality is that we are divided nations and societies.

Despite our deep divisions, however, our destinies are intertwined in a fundamental way. We share a common home: a small planet in a vast universe, a tiny boat in a vast ocean. Whatever calamity happens anywhere in our world — epidemics, poverty, violence, mass displacement, war, terror — it will eventually catch up with all of us.

We share the responsibility to address the fundamental problems of our common world. Certainly, the mighty and wealthy should shoulder bigger responsibility, as they command vast power and resources. It is only fair that more is asked of those to whom much has been given — or, more accurately, those who have appropriated much for themselves. We should unflinchingly remind them of their obligations and press them not for charity, but for enlightened self-interest that understands that might is not permanent and that only shared benefits are sustainable.

We would, however, be gravely mistaken and would have forgotten the lessons of history if we pinned all our hopes on the goodwill of those who currently enjoy disproportionate power, wealth and influence. Power does not readily concede its privileges of its own accord. It resorts to deception, coercion, pressure, sanctions, violence and war to maintain and, if possible, increase its privileges.

The developing countries and the marginalized peoples of the globe stand to gain most from a more peaceful, secure, just and equal world. They owe it to themselves and to coming generations to build solidarity and to steadfastly strive and work and innovate for a better world. It is their duty to ensure freedom, dignity and prosperity for their peoples.

Africa remains the most marginalized of all continents. Undoubtedly, there is some progress, more in some countries than in others. But talk of an African Renaissance, of fastest-growing economies, is misplaced and premature. We should not flatter

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ourselves or allow others to flatter us. Africa remains a producer and small-bit exporter of primary products. It retains minimum revenue from those exports, with foreign companies getting the lion's share. Processing of primary products, value addition, industrialization and technology development barely exist. African economies, physical and social infrastructure, institutional and governance structures, and peace and security architectures remain undeveloped.

Yet Africa boasts tremendous human and natural resources. Indeed, over 60 per cent of global natural resources lie in Africa. It is only when Africa's economies, the quality of its infrastructure, the standards of its health and educational institutions, the level of its artistic, scientific and technological products, the effectiveness of its institutions and enterprises and, more importantly, the quality of life of its citizens reflect more accurately its great potential that we can rightly speak of Africa taking its rightful place in the world. We should safeguard independence and sovereignty, fight ethnic polarization and rampant corruption, chart our own paths, develop bold and imaginative policies that suit our conditions, rely mainly on our own resources and build an Africa that meets the aspirations of its people and makes valuable contributions to humankind.

Eritrea is a young, strategically located nation with significant human and natural resources. It joined the community of independent nations a quarter of a century ago by dint of its people's 30-year struggle for freedom and self-determination, fought and won against tremendous odds. As an independent nation, it has faced the full brunt of an unfair and unjust international order. It has faced demonization, ostracism, sanctions and armed aggression, and that sustained external hostility caused much harm to Eritrea and its people. It slowed down Eritrea's progress, but it was not able to stop it. It could not shake the resolve of the Eritrean people and their Government. Eritrea was severely tested but emerged intact, more determined, more experienced and in many ways stronger. It is peaceful, stable, secure and harmonious: a haven of stability in a turbulent neighbourhood.

Eritrea is, quietly and without fanfare, engaged in comprehensive nation-building. It is pursuing policies and taking concrete measures to strengthen the unity and harmony of its people, fostering their political participation and unleashing their energies and talents. It is laying the groundwork for broad-based and

sustainable economic development. It is putting modern infrastructure in place, step by step. It is working to ensure that all its citizens get good access to nutritious food, clean water, electricity, shelter, transport, communications, health care and educational services, as well as cultural, sports and recreational facilities.

Eritrea has also embarked on a massive water and soil conservation programme and an afforestation programme as part of its comprehensive plan to enhance the environment and fight climate change. Eritrea is confident that it will meet the Sustainable Development Goals ahead of time. In its ambitious development programme, Eritrea avoids dependency and relies first and foremost on its people and on its domestic resources. At the same time, it welcomes and encourages cooperation and partnership, with a focus on trade and investment. Eritrea also seeks to make a modest contribution to peace, stability and cooperation in its wider region, which includes the Nile basin, the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea basin and the Gulf. It has successfully fought and continues to fight radicalization, extremism and terrorism both on its own and in cooperation with its neighbours.

Eritrea extends its hands of friendship and solidarity to all peoples and nations who strive to build their countries and contribute to a fairer, more just and more equal world. Eritrea takes the initiative to engage with all countries, including those who differ with it. Eritrea strongly believes that its political, economic, social and diplomatic path would be smoother and easier if the external obstacles that have been on its path were removed. It therefore once again calls on the Security Council to lift the unfair and unjust sanctions imposed on it for the past nine years. There is no justification for them to continue, and they do not serve any useful purpose.

Another obstacle facing Eritrea — indeed, facing the whole Horn of Africa region — is the 15-year-old occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory by Ethiopia. Eritrea calls on the Security Council to ensure the end of that flagrant violation of international law and several United Nations resolutions.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Yldiz Pollack-Beighle, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname.

Ms. Pollack-Beighle (Suriname): On behalf of His Excellency Mr. Desiré Delano Bouterse, President of the Republic of Suriname, I wish to extend our

congratulations to Mr. Lajčák on his election to preside over the General Assembly. Suriname is grateful to the former President, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his efforts in addressing the issues of small and vulnerable States within the small island developing States construct, and we wish him success in his new role as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Oceans.

Allow me to address critical issues related to the theme of this year's session that are directly related to Suriname and the region we belong to.

Suriname cannot but give special attention to the extraordinary fashion in which the annual hurricane season has presented itself in the Caribbean. Our thoughts go out to the many families, mothers and children, the elderly and the sick who are living the worst possible nightmare. We are convinced that those affected will be comforted by the hope that all is not lost, since the world community stands with them and prays for the betterment and speedy recovery of our region. We also acknowledge the suffering in Mexico as a result of the recent heavy earthquakes and express our deep sympathy for its victims.

Those events confront us with the relativity of human power and State power, whether unilateral or multilateral. A quick review of the damage caused by the recent natural disasters shows the destruction of the means of production and physical infrastructure. That has created social disruption that goes far beyond the immediate needs of the victimized societies. We also observe that the world at large demonstrates a strong sense of solidarity when calamity strikes and humanitarian assistance is urgently needed. However, to alleviate the desperate condition of the peoples, we must, in our international efforts, address the calamities from a deeper and wider perspective.

We must assist the respective Governments in restructuring socioeconomic and physical infrastructure in such a way that those States can become more resilient and reduce their vulnerability in future. That will require the development of innovative concepts and intensive sharing of global experiences. Combining forces on the global scale has become crucial. Furthermore, it will imply aggressive mobilization of adequate resources.

Such necessary resource mobilization will face obstacles. We will have to confront the fact that a number of the more affluent nations entertain inward-looking policies that do not augur well regarding the

pressing need to join hands in solving such truly global problems. Recent weeks have made it very clear to all of us that the forces of nature do not discriminate. Suriname strongly supports the view that nations should proportionately contribute at a global level if we want to survive as humankind.

When scientists indicate precise and foreseeable natural disasters, it is obvious that we should take precautionary measures, mitigate possible dangers and adapt existing structures to minimize the effect. Becoming more resilient remains the only way. In that connection, it is unacceptable that Caribbean countries, including Suriname, are being graduated to middle-income countries, with zero option to obtain concessional loans.

Today, I, too lament the fact that the vulnerability of those countries should be taken into account when classifications are applied. Thus, it is ironic that Suriname is facing such threats of climate change, while at the same time we are making tremendous contributions to mitigate climate change. As a high-forested, low-deforestation country with 90 per cent forest cover — the highest in the world — Suriname provides regulation services to the global climate, including as a carbon sink.

In addition to providing livelihoods to indigenous and tribal communities, our forests are biodiversity hotspots with an impressive number of endemic and internationally significant species. Our forests also support freshwater regulation as part of the unique Amazon ecosystem and provide employment and income generation through an active forest industry. Above all, we have set aside for conservation purposes 1.6 million hectares of pristine rainforest, referred to as the Central Suriname Nature Reserve, as a gift to humankind.

While Suriname's greenhouse-gas emissions have historically been negative, it is a challenge to enhance the country's economic development while maintaining that unique position in the world. To achieve that goal, Suriname is ready to partner with Governments, the global community and other stakeholders to transform our economy into one in which environmental protection — including through the REDD+ programme for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation in developing countries — social advancement and economic prosperity take central stage. Our multi-annual development plan, recently

adopted by Parliament, is testimony to that vision for our nation's sustainable development.

On the issues of non-interference and non-intervention, I draw the Assembly's attention to the following. The natural disasters I just referred to coincide with growing political conflicts, and that may well lead to a serious loss of human lives and the destruction of human achievements. A number of those conflicts are related to a stark disrespect for the basic principles that have been enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations since 1945.

Non-interference in the affairs of sovereign States and non-intervention are not empty principles. They are based on a firm belief that all peoples are equal and that the prevailing structures of government and democracy cannot be prescribed externally. Recent interventions in the Middle East have not created better societies. On the contrary, we have witnessed divided, warring factions that can hardly be qualified as an improvement to the Governments that were ousted.

Suriname also has experienced the ill effects of interference in internal affairs. The destruction of infrastructure and means of production amounted to approximately \$300 million, and much worse than that is the fact that hundreds of children were deprived of access to education and proper health care. Today as a nation we are still suffering from the results of the so-called foreign-supported internal strife that disrupted societies in the interior that were characterized by a socioeconomic order that had lasted for more than 300 years.

Suriname knows what interference means, and the only way we have dealt with it is by insisting on dialogue, which resulted in the signing of the peace treaty in May 1992. So when we tell the world that non-interference and non-intervention are principles to adhere to at all costs, we are speaking from our own experience. For almost three decades, Suriname's commitment to peace and development through the promotion of dialogue and the implementation of broad-based social programmes remained in full accordance with the principles and guidelines of the United Nations. Dialogue in the spirit of mutual respect has led to peace and prosperity.

In that same vein, in 2012 the legislature passed an amendment to the amnesty law of 1992 that applied amnesty for the full period of political violence in Suriname, from 1980 to 1992. In doing so, the legislature complied with article 8 of the Constitution,

which bans discrimination and guarantees equal rights to all citizens. That amendment further provided for the truth and reconciliation commission, allowing for a clear distinction between politically motivated violence and criminal acts.

Allow me to inform this gathering that Suriname's path to peace and sustainable development enjoyed full acceptance in 2015, when a greater majority elected the incumbent Government. Moreover, civil society has taken up the responsibility to advance the peace process through the implementation of initiatives that contribute to the cause of truth-finding and reconciliation.

Against the backdrop of those developments, Suriname took note with concern of the unverified and biased comments published by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers. Therefore, Suriname categorically rejects the assertions of that special procedures mandate-holder, who did not provide the Government an opportunity to respond in a timely manner.

The seventy-first session of the General Assembly marked a milestone in the way the world views the five-decades-old unilateral economic, commercial and financial boycott against Cuba. Last year, not one State voted against resolution 71/5, on definitively ending that unilateral decision, which has proved to be unproductive from all angles. However, the current reality obliges us to continue expressing our deepest concern, since we learned about the continuation of that detrimental and unilateral policy. Suriname therefore, with absolute respect for the sovereignty of each nation to determine its own policies, urges that constructive dialogue and cooperation must prevail and that bridges must be built on the basis of equality and respect for independence and sovereignty.

Suriname rejects any measure that might strengthen the blockade, which is in violation of international law, the sovereignty of States, the principles of non-intervention in internal affairs and self-determination. My Government reiterates the critical importance of those principles and underscores the relevance of the processes of dialogue, diplomacy, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and political and economic cooperation as building blocks for stability, peace and democracy in the Americas.

In that line of thought, we encourage the Member States in general, and especially the South American and Caribbean States, to deal in a constructive manner

with the problems of our sister nation, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Let us continue to stress the need for dialogue between all parties. History proves that interference and intervention are never successful.

Suriname is deeply concerned about the current developments on the Korean peninsula. In whatever configuration for a sustainable solution, we believe that the interests of the Korean people must remain paramount. First and foremost, the Korean people must be given guarantees that violence, whether it originates in North Korea or elsewhere, can never be a solution to the problem. Dialogue and negotiations will be the only remaining road to a sustainable solution for the dignity and well-being of the Korean people in their struggle for peace and development. The example of South America and the Caribbean in remaining a nuclear-weapon-free zone could well serve as a model to be followed. The absence of nuclear weapons creates an environment conducive to dialogue and meaningful negotiations.

The global village is becoming ever more interdependent. Different cultures and ethnic orientations are rapidly becoming the basis for racial and global conflicts. Therefore, we have to find new paradigms to effectively limit dogmatic adherence to religious and social concepts. Tolerance and mutual respect have become a must if we want to guarantee peace and sustainability for future generations.

The Government of Suriname is following, not only with keen interest but also a certain degree of concern, the recent re-emergence in many parts of the world of right-wing extremism framed as populism. That development has the potential to put severe pressure on social cohesion within countries and bilateral relations between nations, thereby affecting opportunities and the potential for cooperation.

Suriname has worked tirelessly to achieve national unity, which has resulted in a very diverse and well-integrated society where tolerance forms one of the basic principles that underpins its very existence. Thanks to the type of nation we have built, very disturbing and destabilizing factors such as right-wing extremism and ethnic and religious intolerance can neither have nor find a place in our nation, nor will they ever be able to take root and grow. Today, Suriname enjoys an exceptional era of tolerance and mutual respect, with Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims and other religious denominations living in an atmosphere of peace and mutual respect. With roots from all continents of the

world and through intensive dialogue and mutual respect, Suriname has become a shining example of the importance of not entertaining supremacist concepts.

Therefore, the Government of Suriname is considered best positioned to understand and analyse the current global trend, which needs to be reversed with immediate effect. Suriname stands ready to share its experience and best practices with other sister nations on the issue of nation-building based on diversity, pluralism, integration and peace. I am convinced that others will then be able to better understand one of the important mottos of Suriname — diversity is power.

My Government strongly believes that focusing on people is the quintessence of the application of power. Suriname is an example in kind. As a nation, we have recently faced the ill effects of a largely commodity-based export economy. The sharp downturn in oil and gold prices in recent years, combined with the unfortunate closure of the century-old bauxite and alumina complex, has challenged Suriname's macroeconomic management since mid-2015.

By any international standards, Suriname faced a severe shock that was compounded on the balance-of-payments side by the sharp increase in imports related to two major investment projects in oil and gold mining, which together accounted for about 35 per cent of annual gross domestic product. We estimate that the economy contracted severely, by more than 10 per cent, in 2016, requiring unprecedented fiscal and monetary policy adjustments, and some temporary balance-of-payments support.

In order to stabilize the exchange rate, reduce domestic demand and re-establish a viable balance of payments position, the monetary authorities sharply curtailed credit creation in the country, with credit to the private sector contracting in nominal terms. Since October 2016, the exchange rate has stabilized, monthly inflation rates have fallen to less than 1 per cent and the country has returned to a current account surplus position. Our macroeconomic response to the external and fiscal pressures started in earnest in August 2015 with a massive contraction in Government expenditure and increases in taxation.

The Government acknowledges that the extractive sector producing gold, fossil fuels and other marketable minerals will remain critical for our economic development in the foreseeable future. We accept that reality, being fully aware that the wealth created must

be deployed in financing a well-planned initiative to expand our economy in a sustainable manner. With that objective in mind, the Government has recently adopted very important legislative measures. One deals with the establishment of a sovereign wealth and stabilization fund, and the other introduces the institutional framework which will facilitate foreign direct investments. As outlined in our multi-annual development plan, Suriname intends to strike a balance between the export of commodities and the export of final products in sync with the services industry.

Suriname acknowledges its citizens as the most important resource for its development. In spite of the challenging budgetary constraints, the socioeconomic policies of the Government remained people-oriented. The continued application of the basic health-care law provides for proper health care for our entire population. In addition, as announced by President Bouterse and as part of the social contract, adequate housing, access to education, youth participation, engagement and sports development, job creation and care for persons with disabilities and the elderly have remained priorities for sustainable development and growth.

The message delivered by Secretary-General António Guterres assured us all of his commitment to the theme of the Assembly's seventy-second session. Suriname pledges its full support and cooperation.

The implementation of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in sync with the necessary reform of the United Nations, will carry a lot of weight. That will be a formidable challenge, and therefore my Government believes that in addition to the mobilization domestic resources, consideration must be given to accessible financing, from a wide array of financial mechanisms, for development, capacity-building, innovation and the transfer of technology for developing countries.

Having addressed those matters of vital importance for the survival of humankind, on the basis of the principles of the United Nations, we bring to mind the Amerindian saying that we have not inherited the Earth, but that we have the Earth on loan from future generations. It is up to us to give that wise saying its substance.

In the final analysis, I wish to underscore and reiterate the utmost importance of youth involvement and participation at the highest levels. My Government has made it a priority to create the conditions for youth

to be part of decision-making processes. I refer to young people, among others, as innovators, members of parliament and cabinet and as chief executive officers within what we refer to as the youth-adult partnership. In 2010, our Government established a special ministry responsible for youth and sport development. It gives me pleasure to announce that this year youth representatives are part of my official delegation to this seventy-second session. Furthermore, it is through political will that more women in our society can accede to the highest echelons of political decision-making.

The 2030 Agenda envisages a world that guarantees all inhabitants of our planet a climate conducive to self-development, a climate of respect for human dignity and of tolerance towards other cultures, with the ultimate goal of giving our planet the gift of diversity based on mutual respect.

It is up to each one of us, regardless of our status in society; it is up to each nation, whether big or small; it is up to this multilateral Organization to focus on people and strive for peace and a decent live for all on a sustainable planet. We owe it to ourselves; yes, we owe it to this and coming generations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Ahmed Abd al-Aziz Ghandour, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the the Republic of the Sudan.

Mr. Ghandour (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to speak on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of the Sudan to wish us all success at this year's General Assembly session. I express my heartfelt congratulations to the President of the General Assembly at its current session, His Excellency Miroslav Lajčák, and wish him success in his endeavours. In addition, I would like to express my appreciation of the wisdom and efficiency of his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, who steered the work of the seventy-first session.

The theme of the seventy-second session — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — reflects the importance the United Nations attaches to the implementation of its pillars: peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights. It also proves that the United Nations is committed to anchoring the concept of peace, prosperity and good livelihood for everyone. Those are the hopes and ambitions that we all that seek in order to achieve sustainable development, fight poverty in all this forms and achieve prosperity for future generations.

The Sudan looks forward to playing an effective role in the United Nations, alongside the rest of the international community, in order to achieve the necessary reform, respond to Africa's needs regarding reform of the Security Council, promote the development role of the United Nations, implement the internationally agreed Agenda for Sustainable Development and fight against the politicization of justice.

As part of the national dialogue initiative led by our President, Mr. Omar Hassan Al-Bashir, in 2014 a Government of National Unity was established with the broad participation of various political components and previously armed groups to promote peace and security in the country. The implementation of the exit strategy for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2363 (2017), proves that the Sudan has turned the page on conflict and has embarked on a new era of peace and stability. We would like to express our thanks and appreciation for the support of the United Nations, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and brotherly and friendly countries.

We hope to receive the support of peace and development funds, especially the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, as well as from the World Bank and its mechanisms, so that we can implement the Government's approach, which promotes peace and implements the outcomes of the national dialogue. That approach will also urge the remaining armed groups to join the quest for peace. That is why our President adopted resolution 479 on 1 July, expanding the ceasefire everywhere until the end of October, even though some of those rebel groups pursue their irresponsible practices, destabilizing Darfur as they carry out desperate military actions in May. Attempted attacks by those groups in Libya and the Republic of South Sudan were futile and failed.

We express our deep concern vis-à-vis the lack of strict action by relevant United Nations entities and the international community against the rebel groups that have been working as mercenaries in Libya and South Sudan. That only tempts them to refuse any engagement in the peace process and comes at the time when the Government of the Sudan is waiting for those groups to implement the peace road map agreement sponsored by the African Union and supported by the international community.

With regard to the cooperation of the Government of the Sudan with the United Nations and the Security Council, we have welcomed the Panel of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) three times in the past. The Panel visited all states of Darfur, and its reports commended the cooperation of my Government and emphasized that Darfur has recovered stability and security. That is why we stress the importance of adopting the recommendation of the Committee Chair to review the sanctions of resolution 1591 (2005), so as to support peace in Darfur and the region.

The Sudan has always defended the principles of justice and international cooperation. We have sought to implement them, especially the principle of fighting impunity. However, the politicization of international justice, as is the case with the International Criminal Court, has jeopardized its political weight. It has disappointed the international community, especially the African community, which had great hopes that that Criminal Court would anchor the principles of international criminal justice.

Sudan's position vis-à-vis the Court, which is expressed in the position of the African Union in its summit decisions, stresses that the International Criminal Court is an organ that manipulates the law for political objectives to be imposed against the will of people, especially African people. The Court, therefore, cannot serve the purpose of justice. For that reason the Sudan calls for heeding the African voice. We call upon the States of the world to anchor the principles of justice without allowing international justice to become a political tool used by some. We also warn against the use of the United Nations in the name of international justice, on the basis of the cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, in a way that tarnishes the reputation of the United Nations and involves it in international political conflicts. We will continue to fight any attempt to involve the Court in the United Nations system, and we call upon all lovers of justice in the world to follow suit.

My Government has spared no effort to fight human trafficking, illicit migration, electronic crime and drug trafficking to ensure sustainable comfort and stability at the international, regional and national levels. That comes from the fact that the Sudan enjoys a geographic position in the middle of the African continent, linking it to the rest of the continent and to the Middle East.

Those efforts include effective and active involvement in the European Union-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative — the Khartoum Process — to address the causes and repercussions of illicit migration in the Horn of Africa, in addition to other cooperation frameworks.

As for refugees, the Sudan hosts some 3 million from neighbouring countries, and other countries as well. We have provided great assistance to those refugees, meeting more than 80 per cent of their needs at a time when the international community meets only 20 per cent of that need. We do that even though half of the refugees live outside of camps, which places pressure on the services we provide to our citizens because of difficult economic circumstances.

I would like to note the recent visit of Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to the Sudan in mid-August, where he met the President of the Republic and many other officials, including myself. He addressed the situation of the refugees in the Sudan and expressed great appreciation for the role the Sudan has been playing on behalf of the international community in providing care for the refugees. He also commended the Sudan for opening its borders at a time when other countries are closing theirs. He called upon the international community to provide further support to the Sudan as it shoulders its responsibility vis-à-vis refugees, and he called for supporting host countries and State institutions caring for the refugees. That is something the Sudan values, and we look forward to hearing the deliberations in the General Assembly around that issue.

The Sudan has received a daily influx of refugees, especially from South Sudan, almost 2,000 persons a day at some checkpoints. In connection with the special relations between the Sudan and South Sudan and the shared connections between the two peoples and countries, my delegation stresses its full commitment to efforts with international and regional partners, especially the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union, to achieve peace and stability in South Sudan. We will also continue our great efforts to address the humanitarian crisis caused by the conflict in South Sudan. My delegation renews its commitment to the full implementation of the agreements signed with South Sudan on 27 September 2012 and all agreements signed between the two countries to build a bright future for the two brotherly peoples.

The Sudan stresses our principled position to fight the use of terrorism in all its forms, including violent extremism, as a means to achieve political objectives. We are committed to all international and regional agreements and conventions that we have ratified, and we have always been an active party at the international, regional and bilateral levels. The contributions of the Sudan have had a great positive impact in fighting that phenomenon and preventing further terrorist attacks through information-sharing and the good relations our institutions have with our international and regional counterparts.

At the national level, in March 2016 we announced our first special field study on the causes of terrorism and the means of fighting it in the Sudan, in cooperation with the United Nations. The study was commended by the many countries that attended and took part in the announcement of the study. We continue our efforts in cooperation with the relevant United Nations organs to ensure that the Sudanese strategy is coherent with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The Sudan was able to fulfil all of its technical commitments in order to obtain foreign debt forgiveness after the separation of South Sudan, through the work of the Tripartite Committee for the Joint Approach to the International Community on Economic Relief, composed of the Sudan, South Sudan and the high-level African mechanism, on the basis of the zero option on apportionment debt, which was extended recently until October 2018. We have also adopted a road map to engage with debtors and the international community after fulfilling all technical conditions to obtain forgiveness in line with the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. However, that has yet to be achieved.

Foreign debt is a great hurdle and a genuine burden for heavily indebted poor countries, thwarting their stability and sustainable development. Debt affects and negatively impacts their relations with the international and regional financing institutions and foreign investments. Therefore we stress the need for forgiveness in line with the Initiative.

The Sudan has been making great efforts to provide fresh drinking water through the President's Zero Thirst programme. We believe in the importance of water. Therefore, we have made great efforts and taken many initiatives to promote cooperation among the Nile basin countries. We hope that those efforts

succeed in achieving sustainable development. To stress the pioneering role of the Sudan in addressing issues of regional development and the environment, in the upcoming months we will host the African Great Green Wall Summit. The Great Green Wall is one of the greatest regional environmental cooperation projects. It stretches from Dakar in the west to Djibouti in the east, to achieve environmental balance in the African desert and to reduce the impact of climate change. Africa will be the main victim of climate change if this is not averted.

The Sudan stresses its firm position with regard to preserving the nuclear non-proliferation regime and destroying all weapons of mass destruction. That is the only guarantee to prevent the use of those weapons and the only way to anchor peace, stability and security in the world. In that connection, we renew our full commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We call upon all countries that have not yet signed the Treaty to do so without any delay.

We renew our firm position with respect to the Palestinian question. We condemn all forms of aggression against religious shrines in Palestine, especially against the holy Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The only way forward towards peace in the Middle East is through the implementation of resolutions of international legitimacy and the two-State solution, returning to the borders of 4 June 1967, in line with the Arab Peace Initiative.

We renew our firm position in support of constitutional legitimacy in Yemen. We call upon all political stakeholders to engage in the political process, reject fighting and violence and return to legitimacy.

My delegation stresses the need to preserve territorial integrity in Syria. We support all efforts to overcome the crisis in that country and highlight the importance of a political solution and the need to respect the will of this great people.

Once again, we emphasize the need to ensure stability in brotherly Somalia. We call for the provision of all forms of support to the Government and the people of that country so as to enable them to overcome their challenges and build legitimate institutions.

With regard to the situation in Libya, our position has never changed. We continue to work with the international community to ensure the success of all initiatives for security and stability, especially the

Skhirat Agreement, which is the cornerstone of a political solution in brotherly Libya. We stress our full respect for the security, freedom and integrity of Libya as well as the prosperity of its people.

My delegation stresses the importance of achieving stability and sustainable development on the African continent and addressing the economic and security challenges that thwart its development, particularly the situations in the Lake Chad Basin, the Great Lakes region and Mali. In this regard, we call upon the international community to support regional initiatives to overcome these challenges, such as the Force conjointe du G5 Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin region initiatives. We also call for the promotion of the strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union in order to achieve peace and stability and implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

In conclusion, we renew our commitment to multilateralism under the leadership of the United Nations with a view to promoting the two most noble of purposes under the Charter of the United Nations: maintaining international peace and security and promoting the prosperity of all people. We stand in full solidarity with the Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres, and support his reform agenda.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. John M. Silk, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Silk (Marshall Islands): On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, I have the honour to convey warm greetings to the General Assembly. I congratulate His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I am proud that his predecessor from the Pacific, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, will continue his service to the United Nations as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Ocean.

I also extend the condolences of my Government for the destruction and tragic loss resulting from the recent disasters in Mexico, the United States, Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Haiti, the Bahamas, Dominica and the territories of the United States and British Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, St. Barthélemy, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos and other islands.

The United Nations stands strong as the only place that all of us in the world have to confront our darkest

challenges together. Even if the present moment appears uncertain, we must all remain confident and committed to ensuring that the Organization will speak for those who might not otherwise have their voices heard.

Recent events with regard to North Korea and its growing nuclear threat must serve as a clear mandate for strong, urgent global cooperation and effective action. The Marshall Islands is a small island nation in the Pacific, and we wish only peace, security and stability for the world. We cannot ignore this sudden and obvious threat to the territory of Guam, our closest neighbour, friend and home to some of our citizens. The threat posed to Guam is a threat to the wider Pacific Islands region, and we express our concern about the challenges these actions have posed to peace, security and cooperation across the wider Pacific Rim.

The highest levels of the Government of the Marshall Islands vociferously condemn the nuclear test of 3 September and related actions. There is no need for debate: these actions are clear violations of Security Council resolutions and seriously challenge the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime based on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. I am appalled that the Marshall Islands, of all countries, is again facing the very real threat of an atmospheric nuclear test over the Pacific Ocean.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands condemns these test efforts not just for its own security, but because we know the impacts first-hand. The 67 nuclear tests conducted in my country between 1946 and 1958 have produced a burdensome legacy that we hope no other nation or people will ever have to bear. These tests were conducted when my country was under the tutelage of the United Nations Trusteeship Council, which was charged with our welfare and well-being. When the Marshallese leaders travelled to New York to present two petitions to urgently halt nuclear tests in 1954 and 1956, the United Nations responded with Trusteeship Council resolutions 1082 (XIV) and 1493 (XVII), which are the only times any United Nations organ has ever specifically authorized nuclear tests. The consequences of this ignorance were — and are — beyond horrific.

Our people and environment have suffered as no other people should. The impacts of this legacy today remain stark and present challenges, passed from one generation to the next: from mother to daughter, father

to son. This is why, in 2012, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and waste outlined the clear human rights implications and responsibilities which we affirm. I thank the Secretary-General for his statement to the Chair of the Pacific Island Forum on 14 August 2016, in which he said that

“finding a solution to this issue is critical for the future of the Republic of the Marshall Islands”,

assuring us that relevant United Nations entities stand ready to respond to requests for assistance.

Recent events should be creating far greater political resolve to curb and ultimately eliminate global nuclear threats. In this regard, the Republic of the Marshall Islands supports those nations that are now able to accede to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in so doing, and we will continue to add our own voice in all forums, including in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the Review and Extension Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

We are committed to a closed and inclusive examination of our own participation in the Nuclear-Ban Treaty by listening closely to our stakeholders and affected citizens, taking into account any possible implications for our common security relations. It will always remain our fervent hope that such weapons of mass destruction shall never again be tested or unleashed upon the world and that all nuclear-armed nations will find the necessary political will to disarm.

Earlier this year, my country experienced the tragic loss of our one-time Minister and climate ambassador, Mr. Tony de Brum, and I wish to express my gratitude to those who have conveyed their condolences. Ambassador de Brum once said that for the Marshall Islands,

“[w]e are suffering the result of climate change and of the nuclear legacy and we have had nothing to do with either... In either case, people have to choose to end this world, this universe. You can either do it slowly with climate change, or you can press a button and blow it up. And neither is justified”.

Just across from the United Nations, in the East River, there sits Belmont Island. It is a small, raggedy little outcrop only 1 metre tall. This island in New York must now serve as a reminder for the world's diplomats

that if they ever see it vanish beneath the rising sea, then they must also know that they have lost the Marshall Islands in the Pacific.

Climate change is real, and no credible scientist could ever make it otherwise. But what we see with our own eyes, in our low-lying islands, reveals a real present and growing threat to our own survival and security as a nation and as a State Member of the United Nations. We welcome the entry into force of the Paris Agreement, which stands as a truly robust, ambitious and long-term agreement. We must not allow our confidence in each other to be thrown off by road bumps in the short term.

We urge the ratification of and full participation in the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, which is the legacy of the personal drive of the late Minister-in-Assistance to the President of the Marshall Islands, Mr. Mattlan Zackhras, who suddenly and tragically passed away last month. At the end of a long night of negotiations last year, the late Minister said that when the Amendment was adopted he would be proud to call on all Marshallese children because he knew that the Kigali Amendment could mean the difference between whether they would have a country — and a future — or not.

We strongly support the leadership of our Pacific island neighbour, Fiji, as the incoming President of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and we hope that in its care and with its leadership, the parties will adopt a strong set of rules. The Paris Agreement is only as strong as the political confidence that stands behind it. It is beyond imperative that, even in such early moments, committed nations start the challenging task of pushing ourselves to do even more. Even with our limited resources, the Marshall Islands is committed not only to implementing the Agreement, but also to exploring where our own action on energy can be strengthened. We must match our own ambitions with respect to emissions with stronger approaches and closer bilateral work.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands strongly agrees with the widespread call from the large and growing chorus of our fellow Member States for a more effective and efficient United Nations. It is beyond necessary. We support the Secretary-General taking action under his own authority to continue to initiate practical but powerful efforts to reduce duplication and improve delivery. It is a question not only of the use

of public funds, including our own, but also of all of us improving our ability to achieve our full potential and making clear progress in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We cannot do it alone, and we cannot do it with an international architect that, however good its intentions, has frequently lost the focus needed to help us make the connections between international forums and our local communities.

Before we engage in an impossible fight over resources, we must first examine the use of our resources already at hand. Our small in-country team often struggles with gaining access to seasoned international staff who can help us learn to navigate the system. The United Nations Development Programme Resident Coordinator for the Marshall Islands actually resides in another nation nearly 3,000 kilometres away. Our Resident Coordinator, who is fully dedicated to her mission, is also charged with being a coordinator for eight other remote island nations, one of which she is a resident of. We must re-examine the management decisions that led to such an outcome. Without stronger focus from the United Nations system, small island developing States could face serious barriers to their ability to implement the SDGs.

The Ocean Conference on the implementation of SDG 14, which took place last June, stands as a watershed moment of political will. But the good words uttered in those forums too often fall short when it comes to making global and regional decisions on oceans and fisheries. The Pacific small island developing States have sounded the alarm on the state of the world's oceans, which everyone has heard, but perhaps the alarm is not loud enough. As parties to the narrow agreement and beyond, we in the Pacific have the potential to effect a profound change in the role of the market in order to dramatically strengthen our own economic trajectory and boost global food security along the way. The United Nations system itself must do far more to help us focus on these transformative opportunities. And even if some of our partners are still slow to rise with us, the marketplace is already leading the way.

What the Pacific region is doing for tuna by ensuring our participation while promoting sustainable practices, we are also doing with the wider oceans. Increasingly our political partners will come to realize that our political support depends not just on the pressure they apply, but on how willing they are to follow our lead on sustainable oceans and fisheries issues. While it may be

our own Pacific economic and environmental survival at stake, it is also a great incentive for the rest of the world to know that two thirds of our planet's surface is no longer in peril.

No one is to be left behind when it comes to the SDGs or to complying with the Charter of the United Nations. Therefore, we should consider that the exclusion of Taiwan from the United Nations and its related agencies has created major challenges for both the Government and the people of Taiwan in the pursuit of their fundamental right to participate. As is the case for my nation, Taiwan is an indispensable partner for the international community, including for our own receipt of humanitarian aid, medical assistance, disease prevention, environmental protection, anti-terrorism and transnational crime prevention. Practical approaches could allow us to work through existing controversies in order to achieve the global benefits of universal participation, including in the International Civil Aviation Organization, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the World Health Organization.

Security Council resolution 2758 (1971) has been misused to justify the people of Taiwan's exclusion from the United Nations. As a result, we are missing an important opportunity to cooperate with a proactive contributor to peace and the common global good. The United Nations, I believe, can and must do better.

In conclusion, there may be trying times, and the challenges of the world are severe, but it is in such adversity that true character is defined. And if an effective United Nations was ever truly needed, it is now. We must look outward to embrace the community of nations rather than look inward at our own self-interest to the detriment of others. Multilateral engagement must be our guiding light as we move towards a more effective and efficient United Nations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yousuf bin Alawi Bin Abdallah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

Mr. Abdallah (Oman) (spoke in Arabic): At the outset, I would like to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Lajčák and his friendly country, the Slovak Republic, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We are confident that his vast experience and competence in the political realm will enable him to steer the work

of this session to a successful conclusion. We are also pleased to express our appreciation for his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson of the Republic of Fiji, whose efforts during his presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session were commendable.

It is an equal pleasure to congratulate Mr. António Guterres on his appointment as Secretary-General, and we wish him every success in his noble tasks. We assure him of the Sultanate of Oman's readiness to cooperate with him and all the States Members of the United Nations to achieve the Organization's lofty goals and objectives, above all the maintenance of international peace and security.

Earlier civilizations flourished in parallel with humankind's belief in divine books, which created a set of values and principles for cooperation, coexistence, knowledge and scientific exchange, *inter alia*. We believe that religious and cultural heritage, along with the values of civilizations, enrich and enhance our understanding of peace. We should therefore not overlook such a heritage since it is an important means for disseminating the culture of peace and coexistence throughout the world.

In our foreign policy and international relations, we have adopted an approach that supports peace, coexistence, tolerance, dialogue and close cooperation among all nations and peoples. The Sultanate of Oman is also committed to the principles of righteousness, justice, equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and the peaceful settlement of disputes, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law. This perspective boosts confidence, enhances mutual respect for the sovereignty of States and promotes good-neighbourliness in a way that enables States to maintain security, stability and prosperity. Accordingly, we call upon all States to support peace efforts and to join hands to spread peace as a global culture at all levels.

Peace and dialogue are of vital importance for humankind. They are a collective responsibility. The United Nations is vested with the responsibility to lead the effort to foster them. However, the support of the international community is also needed to pursue national and international interests, but this cannot be achieved without giving the United Nations a strong role in protecting the world from conflicts and war.

Political and economic conflicts represent a failure of the international community to lend support for the

least developed countries, leading to many conflicts and problems, including transcontinental global migration, the spread of chaos, upheavals, troubles and instability in many parts of the world. The economic slowdown and the decrease in global trade have exacerbated these problems, especially in the developing countries, which have been negatively affected by World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements. The WTO has had limited ability in achieving its primary goal of building developing States' international trade capacities. We believe that the drive of some parties to gain a larger share of global markets or to implement isolationist and protectionist policies aggravates problems and increase tensions throughout the world.

Accordingly, we deem it highly important that the international community adopt a new vision that would lead to greater justice and expand common interests, while helping developing nations attain higher levels of sustainable development. This could be achieved if Member States adhered to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and avoided unilateral decisions or policies. The United Nations must once again take the lead in the path towards peace. Its agencies should play a more active role in the development process in order to achieve sustainable development.

From this rostrum, we call on all States to exert greater efforts and cooperate to help the United Nations restore its pivotal role in international relations. We also look towards a more vital role for the Secretary-General in the fulfilment of the purposes and principles of the United Nations. We support the Secretary-General in his efforts to strengthen and reactivate the role of the Organization in bringing international peace and security to the world.

We also call upon the international community to, in a spirit of responsibility and credibility, spread the culture of dialogue and understanding in order to peacefully settle disputes and end tensions in the world. We consider it essential to discover the causes of weakness in international policies and adopt a more effective approach to settling regional and international problems, including climate change and other issues that affect the security and stability in the world. On this basis, we invite the United Nations and the international community to shoulder their responsibilities and strive to achieve peace, prevent conflicts and wars, and settle differences through dialogue and other peaceful means. Accordingly, my country renews its readiness to work

with the United Nations to build a new world that is secure and stable.

The world is witnessing new transformations in the scientific and technological realms that are affecting people's lives. There is also a steady growth in population. Therefore, we stress the need to adopt a new perspective to establish a global partnership that would benefit from such advanced technologies and scientific progress. The global breakthrough in technology achieved through the signing of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is an important gain for humankind. Several natural disasters recently have struck the world, which should convince all States that it is in their interest to adhere to the Paris Agreement.

The Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons indicated that the resolution adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference on a the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction remains in force until it achieves all its objectives. In that regard, my country supports all international efforts to draft a binding instrument that would cover the loopholes emerging from the Non-Proliferation Treaty. This highly important document would help the international community to eliminate weapons of mass destruction.

My country denounces terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, regardless of its justifications. Based on our adherence to the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for the maintenance of international peace and security, we support all efforts aimed at confronting that scourge by taking the appropriate measures based on the relevant Arab, Islamic and international resolutions, treaties and agreements.

The world is facing real challenges that must be countered through a unified stance so as to respond to the aspirations of humankind. We therefore believe that working on the basis of the true meaning of partnership and common destiny among members of the international community is the most appropriate means to achieve such a goal. We wish the General Assembly every success at this session.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Denis Moses, Minister for Foreign and CARICOM Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Moses (Trinidad and Tobago): Each year, as a community of nations, we gather together to reaffirm the possibilities and potential arising from our resolve that finding solutions to the many challenges facing our planet can best be achieved through our collective action and shared dialogue and by striving for peace and a decent life for all peoples.

On behalf of the Government and the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I am honoured and delighted to address the Assembly today. I extend heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. We are confident that he will discharge his mandate with efficiency and impartiality for the benefit of all nations. He has the support of our delegation.

I also seize this opportunity to convey thanks and best wishes to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, former President of the General Assembly, for his hard work, commitment and leadership during the seventy-first session.

Once again, I extend congratulations to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres on his assumption of the position of Secretary-General. We wish to encourage and commend his direction and guidance in steering us forward.

From shifting weather patterns to global warming to sea-level rise, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale. In our region, we have witnessed the catastrophic effects of Hurricanes Irma, Jose and Maria, which have undoubtedly changed forever lives in several of our Caribbean countries, leaving some islands almost uninhabitable and resulting in many untimely deaths. The recent earthquake in Mexico and hurricanes in the United States ought to be counted within the realm of the recent global disasters.

Trinidad and Tobago, which is in the southernmost part of the Caribbean, was spared from the ravages of these hurricanes. It is with empathy that I extend, on behalf of the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago, heartfelt condolences to our Caribbean family. We are forever mindful that, given our spirit of resilience, we will rebuild that which was lost. Trinidad and Tobago stands in solidarity with the affected countries and will continue to assist with relief efforts. However, rebuilding will require resources, as well as the cooperation and collaboration of the international community, because we simply cannot do it alone.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago joins with other Caribbean Community Governments in expressing our gratitude for the tremendous generosity and support provided in face of the region's most urgent need. Our thanks and appreciation also go out to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the region's first responder. However, CDEMA will need additional resources and funding to enable it to do even more to facilitate its immediate responses to natural disaster.

In the face of the recent natural catastrophes, how can one deny the scientific findings that climate change is real and that it is here and indeed upon us? The events of the past months in the Caribbean remind us all once more that small island developing States (SIDS) remain at the forefront of the impact of climate change. We cannot by any means continue with the same approach, as nature's fury holds no prejudice. Yet, in the light of their categorization as high-income countries under the outdated formula of gross domestic product per capita, Caribbean countries will not qualify for aid and development assistance in their time of need.

I join my Caribbean colleagues in calling for a multidimensional approach that takes into consideration real national needs and priorities and takes these extraordinary circumstances into account in order to provide access to development assistance, aid and debt relief as the Caribbean region collectively embarks together on the arduous task of recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

In order to achieve human and global sustainable development, we must treat unmitigated climate change and global temperature rise as a priority issue. Trinidad and Tobago is doing its part and remains committed to achieving the overarching objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Through our nationally determined contribution, Trinidad and Tobago has indicated its intention to reduce by December 2030 greenhouse-gas emissions in its public-transportation sector by 30 per cent, in comparison with 2013 levels.

Trinidad and Tobago has therefore framed its national development plan for the period 2016-2030, entitled Vision 2030, with a thematic focus of "Many hearts, many voices, one vision", in keeping with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this context, we have mapped our national development

goals in accordance with global priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Trinidad and Tobago and the United Nations signed the Multi-country Sustainable Development Framework in April. We acknowledge and thank the United Nations Development Programme for its assistance with these activities.

We are also pleased that the recently completed quadrennial comprehensive policy review has initiated a recalibration of the United Nations development system. This would better support developing countries, including SIDS, in the implementation of the programmes of action, including the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the 2030 Agenda. In alignment with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the Secretary-General's reform proposals, Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to ensuring that the United Nations development system adopts a more flexible and tailored approach to sustainable development assistance to assist countries in implementing the SDGs in a focused, coordinated, coherent and cost-effective manner.

Oceans cover three quarters of the Earth's surface and contain more than 95 per cent of the Earth's water. It is therefore indisputable that promoting the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources is of critical importance to sustainable development and the survival of all humankind. Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the progress achieved at the recently concluded Oceans Conference in June and the adoption of the historic call for action, as well as the commitments and actions to be taken by Member States to safeguard the health of the oceans through the implementation of SDG 14.

As a small island developing State, Trinidad and Tobago is highly vulnerable to the unprecedented rate of loss of marine biodiversity and the impacts of unsustainable practices on the marine environment. Consequently, we welcome the adoption of the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee established pursuant to resolution 69/292, on the development of a legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Notably, this agreement will seek to address existing regulatory and legal gaps and ensure that the resources of our oceans are properly conserved and managed for the benefit of present and future generations.

After two years of having the Preparatory Committee and about 10 years of negotiations, we believe that the time is long overdue for us to translate words into action. Trinidad and Tobago therefore looks forward to the convening of an intergovernmental conference in 2018 to consider the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee on the elements and to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the Convention.

The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago protects the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens and residents without discrimination based on race, origin, colour, religion or sex. Our Government accords high priority to achieving gender equality and the empowerment and advancement of women, who are pivotal to the achievement of the SDGs. In the words of the Secretary-General, "Women's rights are indeed human rights". One cannot overstate the importance of protecting the rights of women and ensuring their full participation on an equal basis with men.

In placing women at the forefront of our development, it should be noted that a Trinidad and Tobago national is one of two women who sit on the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, which comprises 20 members. With regard to the advancement of girls, the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago recently passed the Miscellaneous Provisions (Marriage) Bill. This bill provides for outlawing child marriage in Trinidad and Tobago by raising the legal age of marriage to 18 years.

We are currently witnessing unprecedented levels of displacement in the world. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, approximately 65.5 million people have been forced to flee their homes. This amounts to nearly 22.5 million refugees. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago considers it important to develop ways to effectively manage migration and to take the necessary steps to enable the process of mainstreaming migration into development planning. We have therefore sought to make the necessary policy changes and to participate in projects and training in order to develop the necessary tools to mainstream migration into development planning.

Trinidad and Tobago was among the 122 States that voted in favour of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted on 7 July. The Treaty is particularly significant as it is the first multilateral legally binding instrument for nuclear disarmament to have been negotiated in 20 years. We look forward to

the convening of the high-level conference on nuclear disarmament by 2018. As a small island developing State, Trinidad and Tobago actively participated in the negotiations to prohibit nuclear weapons, as it is acutely aware of the destructive force of these weapons of mass destruction to, inter alia, human life, the environment, food security, infrastructure and economic growth.

In view of the continued prevalence and negative effects of illegal small arms and light weapons, including the issue of curbing such weapons and its ammunition, Trinidad and Tobago has played leading roles in a number of United Nations initiatives, such as the Arms Trade Treaty. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has contributed significantly to violence and instability in our region. The Arms Trade Treaty remains a key priority for Trinidad and Tobago as it seeks to regulate the illegal transfer of small arms and light weapons and ammunition.

I wish to reiterate to the Assembly the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's unequivocal commitment and unceasing call for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. We remain optimistic that there will be a diplomatic solution to finding an end to this long-standing issue and that in good faith the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba, which significantly challenges its achievement of sustainable development, will be lifted soon.

We remain fully committed to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular to the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in their internal affairs and freedom of trade and navigation. To this end, Trinidad and Tobago consistently supports subregional, regional and international efforts to promote constructive dialogue to bring about the cessation, sooner rather than later, of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Adherence to the rule of law is important to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16, which seeks to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and to ensure equal access to justice for all, as it is one of the pillars for promoting sustainable development.

Trinidad and Tobago, as a democratic society, adheres to the rule of law and the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. As such, we uphold the importance of the International Criminal Court

(ICC) to promoting the rule of law, encouraging respect for human rights and achieving sustainable peace and development, in accordance with international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. As a country which has been credited as one of the forefathers of the ICC through the pioneering work of the late Arthur N. R. Robinson, former Prime Minister and President of Trinidad and Tobago, we remain resolute in our commitment to supporting the mandate of the ICC and its primary objective to help put an end to impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community, as well as to prevent such heinous crimes.

In conclusion, Trinidad and Tobago is particularly pleased with the President's choice of theme for the seventy-second session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". We believe that these concerns and issues are timely and necessary, especially as we are faced with increasing humanitarian challenges, threats to international peace and security, as well as the environment. In harmony with the global vision for multilateralism, we are committed to working together collectively to find enduring and sustainable solutions to global disparities, poverty, rising inequality, protracted conflicts and other challenges facing the world today. We must all do our part in this noble endeavour for the good of humankind.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Brahim Hisséine Taha, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and International Cooperation of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Mahamat (Chad) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to extend my warm congratulations to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to assure him of our cooperation as he carries out his important mission. I would also like to express our appreciation to Mr. Peter Thomson, who led the work of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session with talent and discernment.

A decade ago in the Assembly, we deplored the emergence of various global crises, in particular financial ones and their adverse consequences on the world economy. Even today, developing countries, including my own, continue to suffer the consequences of the fall in the prices of our exports. This situation

negatively impacts the financing of our countries' development plans and strategies.

Humankind is also called upon to address new kinds of conflicts, such as those related to the challenges of terrorism, whose growing tentacles threaten our stability and further impoverish our economies. Equally important are the challenges related to climatic and environmental hazards, whose damaging consequences have been demonstrated in the recent landslide in Sierra Leone, the onslaught of the hurricanes in the Caribbean and the United States, and the earthquake in Mexico. We take the opportunity to express, from this rostrum, our solidarity with the bereaved Governments and families in the various affected countries.

Moreover, the ongoing phenomena of drought and desertification weaken our ecosystems, in particular the drying up of Lake Chad, causing massive population displacements and increasing pressure on the already limited resources of our countries. Its foreseeable disappearance would be a disaster for the 50 million human beings who live off the resources that Lake Chad provides. The letter and spirit of the theme of our current session and the commitments contained in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change should encourage the international community to save Lake Chad.

The economic and financial crisis affecting developing countries is undermining the efficient implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was tirelessly built on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals. Its adoption in 2015 gave rise to a great deal of hope because it is supposed to reverse the growth of poverty and promote development. However, with the persistence of the economic crisis, recurring threats to peace and security, the appearance of cyclical pandemics and the increase in the phenomenon of migration, we fear that these scourges will have a negative impact on the implementation of the Agenda.

In this difficult economic context, in early September in Paris Chad organized a round table to finance its national development plan. We take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed to the success of the round table. We hope that the pledges made on that occasion will be fulfilled.

At the political level, Chad intends to consolidate its institutions and strengthen the democratic process by renewing its institutional framework. With this in mind, next October, in line with the social project

of President of the Republic of Chad, His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, Chad will convene a national forum on the institutional reforms charged with adapting the administrative and political structures to the country's new realities.

In addition to the difficult economic context, we in the subregion of the Sahel and the Sahara face particular security and humanitarian challenges. Indeed, the security situation in the countries of the Sahel and the Sahara continues to deteriorate as a result of the actions of terrorists, armed groups and traffickers of all stripes throughout the region. Recent attacks by terrorists in the capital of Burkina Faso and against the forces of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, as well as almost daily attacks in north-eastern Nigeria and the far north of Cameroon, show their determination to wage war against us to the end.

This resurgence of terrorist attacks challenges us and compels us to respond. This is why the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), following the example of the Multinational Joint Task Force, have established the G-5 Sahel Joint Force in the Lake Chad basin to fight the Da'esh-affiliated terrorist group Boko Haram.

In Mali, as in the Lake Chad basin, my country is committed and has made enormous human, material and financial sacrifices. This commitment — undertaken by the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, with the support of all Chadians — will endure because the collective security of the region and beyond is at stake. We must therefore consolidate our means of response if we want to counter this evil.

The multifaceted support of the international community, and in particular of our Organization, is indispensable. We recognize the primary responsibility of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. Chad supports its peacekeeping operations throughout the world. Therefore, there is no question of our replacing the other forces engaged in Mali. The G-5 Sahel Joint Force is a complementary entity whose objective is to respond appropriately to the asymmetrical and unconventional warfare waged by terrorists and traffickers of all kinds. It is for this reason that we call upon the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council, to grant a robust mandate to ensure that the Joint Force has sustainable resources to carry out its tasks.

The humanitarian situation is exacerbated by the particularly difficult security situation in our subregion, which is reflected in large-scale humanitarian crises, the massive displacement of people, famine, malnutrition and epidemics. For the past several decades, my country has welcomed more than 600,000 refugees and displaced persons fleeing conflicts in neighbouring countries, as well as returnees and internally displaced persons following the conflicts in Libya and the Central African Republic.

The current global situation and the persistence of hotbeds of tension in Chad are a source of serious concern for my country. While we recognize the sustained support of all our partners for the humanitarian problem in Chad, we call on the international community to make greater efforts to alleviate the suffering of the host populations, refugees and displaced persons.

One of the consequences of economic difficulties and unrest is the massive migration of young Africans to other places, particularly Europe. That is an unbearable phenomenon, considering the conditions of travel and residence in certain countries of transit and reception. That is why Chad, which is a transit country for migrants, is consulting with its various partners to address the root causes of the phenomenon and calls for massive investment in the development programmes in the countries of origin of migrants in order to put a stop to the loss of human resources.

The humanitarian situation can be resolved only if the outbreaks of conflict in the neighbouring countries of Chad are resolved. That is why the Chadian Government is very attentive to those conflicts and will continue to work with the international community to put an end to them. The violence in the Central African Republic continues. Chad welcomes the steps taken by President Touadera and his Government to assert the presence and authority of the State. He has urged all armed factions to commit themselves without delay to the peace process. We believe that the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic is the opportunity that all parties to the conflict should seize in order to restore peace and security in that brotherly country.

Regarding the situation in Libya, Chad gives its full support to the United Nations and the African Union in the search for reconciliation among the various Libyan parties. But the solution to the crisis is in the hands of the Libyan political actors themselves, who have the

historical responsibility to meet the expectations of their people.

South Sudan is like a wound on the body of our continent. Here too, the protagonists have a moral obligation to put an end to the intolerable suffering of the people. The international community should support the revitalization of the August 2015 agreement and the national dialogue.

At the international level, Chad welcomed the resumption of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba. There is no longer any obstacle to the normalization of relations between the two countries. My country believes, therefore, that maintaining the decades-long embargo against Cuba is unfair and counterproductive.

The Palestinian question remains a fundamental issue, with evident repercussions on other crises. Thus a just and acceptable solution must be found, one that includes the peaceful coexistence of the two States of Israel and Palestine. Therefore, Chad will support all efforts aimed at the recognition of the State of Palestine in all its aspects and on the basis of the 1967 borders.

The world has been facing an unacceptable crisis in recent weeks, that of the plight of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Burma, who are suffering a veritable ethnic-religious purge. Chad believes that the whole world must rise up in opposition and call on the Burmese Government to put an immediate end to that tragedy.

The Republic of Chad is deeply concerned about the threats to world peace caused by the nuclear tests conducted by North Korea. The leaders of that country must gauge the dramatic consequences that could come about as a result of that policy and should prioritize dialogue in order to assert their rights.

Finally, with regard to the proposals for United Nations reform, Chad reiterates the common position of Africa as determined by the African Group in New York, which emerged from the Ezulwini Consensus. We believe that the best way to reform the United Nations is to reform the Security Council and to grant a seat to Africa as a permanent member, thus enabling it to be involved in the decision-making process in world affairs.

Whether with regard to economic, climatic or environmental questions or domestic or international issues, Chad has always been guided by concern to

ensure the safety and welfare that the citizens of the world have the right to expect from their leaders. My country invites each of the States represented here today to implement the theme adopted this year by the Assembly in order to better our planet and the lives of its inhabitants.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Kamina Johnson Smith, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica.

Ms. Smith (Jamaica): I am delighted to extend the warm congratulations of Jamaica to the President for assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at the seventy-second session and to assure him of our support. We are particularly pleased to note his selection of a theme that underscores the fundamental importance of the transformative 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development, which is a plan for people, planet and prosperity.

I express, on behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica, our deepest sympathies and prayers for the families and loved ones of victims of the recent hurricanes, which directly impacted our Caribbean brothers and sisters and those in the United States, as well as the families and loved ones of victims of recent earthquakes in Mexico, our dear friend from the region. I am deeply moved by the fact that following the passage of two massive hurricanes, thousands of people across the Caribbean are now forced into a life that is dramatically different from what it was just a few days ago. On behalf of our Caribbean brothers and sisters directly impacted by the hurricanes, we wish to thank those countries and organizations that have given without being asked, and to urge those who have the means to support these countries and their peoples in this time of urgent need.

For us in the Caribbean, climate change is not a philosophical concept or an academic debate. It is an existential issue. It is our reality, and it requires urgent and effective action. We are ever mindful of our responsibility to strengthen our resilience and expedite efforts towards adaptation and mitigation. Yet our ability to do so is greatly impacted by the new catastrophic events that cause social dislocation and severe misalignment of our economies. The limited resources that we have are dwarfed by the huge sums required to meet recovery and reconstruction costs. How do small States like ours, many already facing adverse debt dynamics, mobilize the financing required

to build climate-resilient infrastructure? To do so, it is imperative that we identify both grant funds and concessionary financing that can support investment in resilient infrastructure over the long term. If not, we will continue to be caught in an inescapable cycle of devastation, recovery and reconstruction, until the next disaster strikes.

While it is essential to attend to the immediate humanitarian needs and reconstruction efforts, we must also urgently address our long-term Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs). I urge that in our collective efforts to implement the SDGs, we take account of the tremendous challenges faced by vulnerable countries completely knocked off course by external shocks. In such circumstances, the review and follow-up mechanisms associated with the time-bound commitments of the Agenda are rendered meaningless. Therefore, we call on the United Nations system to establish a mechanism to provide the requisite support and compensation to vulnerable countries affected by natural disasters, where their implementation of the 2030 Agenda and progress towards achieving the SDGs have been derailed as a result of such external shocks.

In recognition of our vulnerabilities as a small island developing State and the attendant complexities of our status as a middle-income country, Jamaica is collaborating with Chile on a new initiative called the Resilient 20. It seeks to create an alliance to promote resilience in countries prone to natural disasters, with a focus on middle-income countries.

We also support calls for the development of a climate change vulnerability index to provide a standardized method for characterizing vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change. That would enable international financial institutions and bilateral donors to better channel financial and technical resources towards countries most susceptible to loss and damage from climate change.

Jamaica ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in April, and regards that historic Agreement as critical to efforts to arrest the impact of climate change. Small island developing States were at the forefront of those negotiations and remain engaged in the Conference of the Parties process. It is an inescapable fact that we contribute the least to carbon emissions and yet we bear the brunt of the damage. In that context, we implore all Member States to abide by the commitments of the Agreement.

Climate change also poses risks to tourism, which is an industry that owes its competitiveness to the pristine nature of our environment. Sustainable and inclusive economic growth and job creation are priorities for Jamaica, and tourism plays a critical role in ensuring that they are achieved. That industry relies heavily on the long-term sustainable investments made by the private sector, both national and international.

For this International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, we have sought to increase such investments, create more jobs, promote culture and support community development, while safeguarding the natural environment. In November, in partnership with the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the World Bank Group, Jamaica looks forward to hosting the United Nations-WTO International Conference on Partnerships for Sustainable Tourism, which will be the first time such a conference is being held in the Caribbean.

Jamaica is deeply concerned about the heightened menace to international peace and security, arising particularly from the threat of nuclear weapons. We have a long-standing commitment to the goal of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world and are a State party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which declared the Caribbean and Latin America as the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area. At the universal level, therefore, we welcome the fact that we now have the first global Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as a critical step towards addressing some of those concerns. It is our hope that it will enter into force in short order and be duly observed universally.

As global citizens starkly aware of how closely our futures are intertwined, we condemn the recent nuclear and ballistic-missile tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which pose a grave threat to international peace and security. We urge North Korea to immediately and fully comply with its international obligations under all relevant Security Council resolutions and to resume dialogue on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

The challenges that currently impede global peace and security require that we identify and address the root causes of conflict. We therefore fully support the focus placed by the Secretary-General on sustaining peace across the continuum from prevention, conflict resolution and peacekeeping to peacebuilding and long-term development.

We in Jamaica are working to provide our citizens with a safe and secure environment in which to live full and productive lives. Our strategy includes placing greater emphasis on safeguarding our porous borders, through which illicit firearms enter. Jamaica has benefited from the support of our international partners, and we invite continued collaboration in curbing this illicit trade. We therefore look forward to the third Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, to be convened in 2018. Furthermore, Jamaica will continue to play its part in supporting the universalization and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty.

People and their well-being are at the heart of our commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We remain focused on the most vulnerable of our citizens to ensure that those furthest behind will benefit first from the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The alignment between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and our national development plan, Vision 2030, creates a framework within which we can identify and achieve our priorities, not least of which is to ensure the dignity of the individual.

What has become increasingly evident, however, is that securing the resources for the implementation of those development objectives remains critical at both the national and the international levels. In recognition of that fact, Jamaica has partnered with Canada to identify new and innovative means of financing development. Through the Group of Friends of SDG Financing, which our countries co-chair, we have been promoting the establishment of partnerships with the private sector, philanthropic organizations and academic institutions. We are exploring innovative financial mechanisms that can spur the investments needed to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

Issues related to global economic governance, debt sustainability and SDG financing take on even more significance for highly indebted middle-income countries like Jamaica, which have large public investment needs but limited fiscal space. Our reduced access to concessionary finance and official development assistance is a direct consequence of our middle-income designation. We contend that the use of gross domestic product per capita as the sole criterion to graduate countries such as ours from concessionary financing represents an inadequate and inaccurate measure of a country's true development status.

Accordingly, middle-income countries face the risk of having their hard-won socioeconomic gains reversed as a result of losing well-needed financial support, precisely at the time they need to consolidate and build on the gains they have made. We therefore commend and thank those, including the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Commonwealth Secretariat, that advocate for the application of a broader set of indicators that take account of the structural gaps in our countries. From a global perspective, it is important that the international economic and financial architecture be aligned with Agenda 2030 and take account of that very important distinction. Jamaica therefore urges that policymakers embed the SDGs into their design of international regulatory frameworks.

Jamaica looks forward to the convening later this year of the eleventh World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, which brings with it the potential for advancing the Doha Development Agenda. As a small island developing State with an open economy that is highly reliant on foreign trade, we are dependent on a vibrant and dynamic global trading environment. We must secure improved market opportunities beyond our shores.

We cannot, however, participate in the international economic and trading system without correspondent banking relations. Several international banks have withdrawn correspondent banking services from many small countries, including in the Caribbean, in an effort to de-risk their client portfolios in response to stringent regulatory penalties for compliance breaches. However, what is viewed by international banks as a simple balance-sheet issue has had unintended negative spill-over effects for countries in the Caribbean, with serious political and economic consequences. We call for urgent international attention to be given to that deepening crisis.

I now turn to the issue of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which exact a high socioeconomic and development cost on all countries, but disproportionately so in small island developing States. Jamaica agrees that an effective response to that global pandemic is best addressed through multi-stakeholder partnerships in a comprehensive whole-of-Government response. We are firmly on that path. Jamaica is addressing NCDs by promoting healthy lifestyles from birth, increasing awareness of NCDs and encouraging physical activity across the country. We are also strengthening our

policy and regulatory frameworks to address obesity in childhood and adulthood and other risk factors.

Such efforts should be complemented by action taken at the global level. We therefore look forward to the 2018 high-level meeting on non-communicable diseases and reiterate the call for greater access by developing countries to the findings of modern research and technology.

Jamaica is committed to the empowerment of women and girls, and our young people. We have revitalized our national youth parliament and created a national youth advisory council to ensure that young people have a voice at policymaking levels in our country. We are strengthening our legislative and policy frameworks to address violence against women and girls and to foster economic opportunities. We will also protect our children from abuse by maintaining vigilance with respect to new and emerging threats, such as cyberbullying and sexual exploitation online.

Earlier this year, Jamaica became a party to The Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, and enacted legislation for its implementation. As we strengthen our national institutional framework to address trafficking in children, we also look forward to participating in next week's High-level Meeting on the Appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The movement of persons across borders is a natural phenomenon. Migrants are an asset both to their countries of destination and their countries of origin. Jamaica highly values the contribution that our diaspora makes to national development and to the development of their host countries. We are actively working on strategies to deepen our engagement.

Consistent with a renewed focus on placing people at the centre of sustainable development, we must not forget the plight of the refugees and persons displaced by conflict and natural disasters — occurrences not of their own making. Against this background, the ongoing deliberations on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration take on even more significance as we move to the intergovernmental negotiations phase during this session of the General Assembly.

Jamaica's adherence to the principles of the United Nations is rooted in a belief in multilateralism and the benefits we derive from collaboration and cooperation. The most intractable disputes require us to engage

collectively in the quest for lasting and meaningful solutions. In this regard, we reiterate our call for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. This unjust embargo has restricted the ability of a hard-working and self-reliant people to engage in legitimate trade, to travel and to undertake international financial transactions.

Turning to the Middle East, we continue to believe that the best solution to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis rests in a negotiated political settlement based on a just, lasting and comprehensive agreement that guarantees the security of Israel and provides for a Palestinian State within internationally recognized borders.

With respect to the situation concerning Western Sahara, we recall the appeal of the Security Council to all parties to show realism and a spirit of compromise to move the negotiations forward. Jamaica therefore supports the relaunch of negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations, leading to the resumption of a process with the aim of reaching a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution.

Our collective efforts in all these political, economic and social areas require an effective and dynamic United Nations. Jamaica therefore supports reforms that improve coordination, enhance coherence and strengthen the effectiveness of the Organization. Reform measures must ensure that the United Nations remains connected to the people it seeks to serve and must be informed by the realities on the ground in programme countries. They should advance all three key pillars of the work of the United Nations: peace and security, development and the promotion of human rights. A renewed and revitalized United Nations reform effort will allow us to reap the full benefits of multilateralism.

I conclude by reaffirming Jamaica's unfailing belief in our ability as a community of nations, whose destiny and prosperity are intertwined, to make a difference in the life of every human being. I therefore encourage all of us to be bold and unrelenting in our quest to make this world a better place, leaving no one behind. Let us go forward in the conviction that we can achieve peace and prosperity for our peoples and protect our planet for the benefit of future generations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Asim, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives.

Mr. Asim (Maldives): We stand today at a crossroads between old wars and new conflicts; between what we know and what we fear; between the needs of a changing planet and the demands of a growing population. We remain caught between human ambition and human limitations. In these times of change, we must turn once again to the principles that define the Organization — those that make us who we are and who we would like to become.

Rising from the darkness of war, the United Nations shone like a beacon of light. Dedicated to seeking peace, the Organization became the purpose for many of those fighting for freedom, fighting fear and fighting for the right to be. The United Nations was and is the best hope we have for humankind. The United Nations was built on the promise of peace and salvation. It is a place where every issue can be debated for a solution and where every nation has a voice, regardless of its size or might. That is why we believe that the theme for this session of the General Assembly — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — is most appropriate. This is what makes up the core of the Organization and what defines our work.

Please allow me to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his assumption of the role of President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I also welcome the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, to his first general debate and commend him for the dedication he has demonstrated throughout his first year in office.

The United Nations is what we all make of it. It is made up of us, the Member States, and its successes and its weaknesses are determined by how much we put into it. My country, the Maldives, envisions a United Nations that is fair and representative of its diverse membership, that takes into account the views and opinions of all, and that forms consensus based on compromise and dialogue. We envision a United Nations that commits and delivers.

Our vision for a stronger United Nations is founded on President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom's policy of strengthening national resilience — economic resilience, social resilience, political resilience and, indeed, environmental resilience. It is based on crafting meaningful global solutions, built on national policies and experiences, to the common problems of our times and for our common and shared destiny.

The world must become a safer planet for all. No man, no woman and certainly no child should suffer due to conflict, yet we know that this is not the case. Far too many people are dying in conflicts across the world. Far too many mothers are living in fear, unsure of the fate of their children, and far too many children are seeing their futures crumble in front of them.

In Palestine, another year ends without permanent peace or permanent hope. An independent, sovereign State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, established along the 1967 borders, is the only solution and the only way. Yet, many resolutions have been adopted without action and many peace processes have been abandoned without progress. The shameful occupation by Israel continues, without any consequences. Violence, economic deprivation, fear, hunger and hopelessness — these are what a child in Palestine is born into. Generations have now matured knowing nothing else. That must end.

In Syria, more than a quarter of a million people have lost their lives, with many millions displaced and many more millions made refugees. War crimes have been committed, chemical weapons used and inhumane treatment normalized. That suffering must end.

As hundreds of innocent people continue to flee violence, conflict and endless suffering — in their greatest numbers since the world wars — it has become imperative that we seek sustainable, long-term solutions that address the well-being and welfare of migrants and refugees. Incidents of hatred, Islamophobia and xenophobia, which have become so frequent today, can only breed more violence, intolerance and hatred. Our policies of fences, force and fear must end.

In Myanmar, the situation of Rohingya Muslims, who are some of the most persecuted people in the world, presents another tragic case. Systemic violence, including massacres, the torching of homes, forced displacement and forced migration, are acts of ethnic cleansing that are alarming, to say the least. Those responsible for such barbaric actions must be brought to justice swiftly. Those acts of prejudice, violence and discrimination against Rohingya Muslims must end.

Instilling fear of the other is easy. Determining others to be worthless owing to their religion, race, ethnicity, nationality, Islamophobia or any other reason is a short step away. When that happens, it is easy to ignore grave violations; it is easier to even encourage them. It is then, and only then, that we see, as we have

seen, the worst of humankind. We cannot allow another wave of genocide to recur — not on our watch.

Chaos, vacuum and uncertainty have given the opportunity for Da'esh to start its own brand of terror, its own version of religion and its own brutal methods of fear. Combating terrorism and fighting violent extremism and radicalization are national priorities. We have enacted national legislation and formulated a comprehensive national policy in our fight against violent extremism. Last year, we also established a national centre for counter-terrorism. It is a top priority for the Maldives.

The Maldives is working with its bilateral and international partners, studying best practices and forging common consensus. We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General in achieving greater global coordination in the fight against terrorism. The establishment of the new United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, we hope, will inject more energy into the implementation of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. The Secretary-General will have our full support.

We must all do more. Today, we are in the midst of a war like no other. Our enemies have no single face, no single identity, no single country and no single strategy. The only things they have in common are their brutal methods and misplaced ideology. The fact that they kill more Muslims — the very people they allegedly fight to protect — proves their twisted reasoning. Such terrorism and such extremism must end.

In North Korea, the most recent tests of ballistic missiles, and with them the real threat of nuclear weapons and war, have alarmed us all. They are a clear violation of international law and an unnecessary act of provocation. There is every possibility now that they could lead us down the path of destruction. We condemn those actions and urge North Korea to return to dialogue, let multilateralism take its course and choose peace over war. These blatant attempts at aggression must end.

The world must become a more hopeful place for all — a place where people enjoy decent and meaningful lives. Adopting a proactive and constructive stand is our approach. Sustained and targeted investment is our policy. Looking to cultivate a culture of respect for human rights, at home and abroad, is our goal. We believe that we have been successful.

The Gender Equality Act has guaranteed in law what Maldivians have been practicing for decades — equality for women at home, at work, in decision-making and in our society. Policies aimed at increasing the representation of women in leadership positions are showing results. Laws, policies and regulations have created a framework in which every man, every woman, every Maldivian can be a champion for gender equality. We need to do more, as all countries do, but we are proud of our considerable progress.

People with disabilities are supported through financial and material support. Our elderly population is getting the compassion and financial support we owe it, through well-targeted policies. Universal health care has been realized across the country, in all 188 islands. Easy access to a medical doctor, sea ambulances and a pharmacy on every island are ensured. The Maldives spends more than 9 per cent of its gross domestic product on health-related expenses, which is the highest in the region of South-East Asia. It is an investment that has propelled us on our development path. Lymphatic filaria, measles, malaria and polio are all diseases that have been eradicated in the Maldives.

Access to safe, habitable and affordable housing is recognized as a human right in the Constitution. Considerable progress has been made with several housing units built and awarded under public-housing schemes, despite the scarcity of land and the remoteness of islands. Achieving near-universal literacy and universal enrolment in schools has not stopped us. We are investing continually in improving the quality of our schools, our teachers, our curriculum and our approaches so as to ensure that no child is left behind.

We are also investing in our young people — the future of our nation. Caring for the physical, mental and social well-being of our young people — the largest portion of our population — is a cornerstone of the Government's policy. We are focused on creating an enabling environment in which they will thrive and shine, including through the promotion of unity, cultural values, national identity and national spirit through programmes such as Tharika, launched earlier this year.

The Maldives is a middle-income country, but like every country we want to achieve higher growth and even greater development. If that is to happen, large-scale investment is necessary. Investments are a means to support not only our economic development but also our

social development. Large-scale projects will help to provide economies of scale and facilitate the expansion of key sectors of the economy, as well as create jobs and opportunities for our youth so that their creativity can be unleashed. Yet it has become increasingly difficult for middle-income countries like the Maldives to access concessional financing for development projects, thereby leaving them no other choice than to accept commercial interest rates and further increase their debt burdens. That will undoubtedly make the transition from the middle-income category to higher levels of development all the more challenging.

Our successes at home provide the basis for our solutions to the global problems that are facing our world. Our focus globally has been to ensure that we pay attention to the most vulnerable. That is why we believe that focusing on those who have no voice and are not usually represented and ensuring that their voices are heard should be the international community's collective focus, as it was ours during the six years we served on the Human Rights Council. Accordingly, while on the Council, we established the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the work of the Human Rights Council. Those two groups of countries are acutely underrepresented in Geneva. Our priority therefore was women, children and the disabled, and we initiated discussion on the link between climate change and its consequences on human rights. We worked hard to establish the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment — a major global milestone.

The world must be made a happier place to live in, and that can be achieved only through our collective will to approach our shared problems with concrete solutions. There is no greater global threat than that posed by climate change. In 1987, when the Maldives first spoke about sea-level rise, the science was still new and the threat relatively unknown. We persisted in our advocacy because we believed that the threat of climate change deserved and, indeed, warranted global attention. The Maldives hosted the first Small States Conference on Sea Level Rise in 1989. We helped establish the Alliance of Small Island States — one of the most influential groups with regard to climate change and sustainable development — which we have chaired since 2015. In 2008, the Maldives introduced

the first United Nations resolution on human rights and climate change (Human Rights Council resolution 7/23), which was the first time that a United Nations document acknowledged that link.

Today, the threat of climate change is very real. Unpredictable weather, more frequent and intense natural disasters and unprecedented temperatures are the norm rather than the exception. The unprecedented frequency and the intensity of the recent hurricanes that struck the Caribbean, the United States and the Pacific islands last year are all powerful signs that our planet has changed significantly. Island nations, including the Maldives, are the first to be devastated by such impacts, but we are not the only ones. Today, climate change is becoming a reality for the rest of the world whether or not we choose to believe it.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere sympathies to those who were recently affected by Hurricanes José, Irma and Maria. I assure them that we will not stop our advocacy with regard to the effects of climate change.

We have proposed many solutions. The full implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is our priority. The reduction of harmful emissions, transitioning to renewable sources of energy and investing in mitigation and adaptation are all crucial. We need to join together in meaningful and durable partnerships to find sustainable solutions. We need constructive engagement, leadership — such as we are seeing from China, Brazil, India, Canada, France, Germany and countless others — and a certain degree of openness to change on the part of all countries, including developing and developed ones.

At home, we are investing in renewable energy through the transition to a low-carbon economy. As the Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, and in collaboration with the International Renewable Energy Agency, the Maldives launched the initiative for renewable island energy, which will facilitate support for small island States in their transition to renewable energy and in achieving energy efficiency. We are looking at innovative approaches to fulfil the development needs of our people that do not compromise the needs of our planet. We have lent our voice and shared our experience. We have requested support to make our economy and our country more resilient to the shocks and impacts caused by climate change.

Taking care of our ocean is intimately linked to taking meaningful action on climate change. The Maldives and other island nations are custodians of large expanses of ocean. Yet every person in this Hall, every community which they represent and every country they come from benefits from our oceans and depends on the health and wealth of our oceans and seas. Every other breath we take comes from the ocean. In the Maldives, the ocean is the backbone and the artery of its two main economic sectors: fishing and tourism. The ocean defines who the Maldivians are — traditional seafarers and members of fishing communities who rely on the produce that the ocean offers them.

We therefore welcomed and actively participated in the first United Nations Oceans Conference, held earlier this year, and despite the hardships, we have preserved our traditional method of pole-and-line fishing, which is the best regarded, cleanest, greenest and most sustainable method of fishing, as it is predicated on catching fish individually with practically no by-catch.

Since 2010, our entire exclusive economic zone, which comprises nearly 1 million square kilometres, has been declared a shark sanctuary. As the current Chair of the Save Our Sharks Coalition, we call on other countries to adopt that measure. Accordingly, an entire atoll is recognized by UNESCO as a biosphere reserve, while many other marine resources and areas are protected and preserved. In fact, there are many more uninhabited islands with marine protected areas than populated islands in the Maldives. That is why the total ban on the exploitation of ecologically significant marine creatures — such as turtles, whales, dolphins, rays, and whale sharks — is strictly enforced. At the same time, Maldivians are some of the most prolific consumers of fish and marine products, thereby demonstrating to the world that the sustainable use of marine resources is indeed possible.

We must not forget those who suffer the consequences of natural disasters. We are witnessing the total destruction and loss of life resulting from the earthquake in Mexico. As the international community, we must strive to do our very best for them and the many others throughout the world who are suffering from disasters, and focus on cultivating resilience through better rebuilding.

Climate change, sustainable development, and the protection of our ocean are not trends or ephemeral

infatuations. Inaction will cost us our progress, prosperity, the lives of our people and the future of all our nations. This is not the time to question what we already know. This is not the time to turn inwards or look the other way. There is no time to waste. It is time to act.

Two days ago, we celebrated 52 proud years as a Member of the United Nations. Throughout our membership over the past five decades, we have worked with a vision of a United Nations that protects people, providing them with a safe haven and access to their rights; a United Nations that preserves our planet, prioritizing the needs of our present generation without compromising those of the future; a United Nations that promotes peace, a world free from fear and full of bright tomorrows and an abundance of hope.

We have focused on providing meaningful, pragmatic and real solutions, based on sound national experience, for our common shared destiny. It is because we have a meaningful vision to promote that we continue to make every effort for the common cause of humankind. It is our firm belief in the power of multilateralism — the same faith that propelled us 52 years ago to seek membership of the United Nations, the very first foreign-policy decision of the independent Maldives — that pushes us to be effective members of the international community.

It is because we have never served before; it is because of the promise of equality of representation and our conviction that every nation, large or small, should have a voice and can make a difference; and it is because of our firm conviction that size does not determine destiny or value that, for the first time in our 52 years of membership of the United Nations, we are seeking a seat on the Security Council for the 2019-2020 term.

We stand tall and proud because we believe that we have much to offer: fresh perspectives, fresh ideas and new concepts that would bring renewed dynamism and new approaches to the United Nations. The Maldives deserves an equal chance to serve on that international organ. We are dedicated to the cause of peace in a sustainable world, and we are determined to leave a mark and make a difference.

The triumph of multilateralism, the pinnacle of our common vision, lies in our collective approach to solving the global challenges of our time. The Maldives

stands ready to take that leap of faith, providing shared solutions for our shared, common destiny.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alain Aimé Nyamitwe, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Nyamitwe (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): I have the pleasure of conveying to the Assembly the most fraternal greetings of Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, President of the Republic of Burundi. He would have liked to be present here, but pressing commitments back home prevented him from making the journey to New York.

My delegation wishes to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his outstanding election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I take this opportunity to pay a vibrant tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, a worthy son of Fiji, for a job well done.

As this is his first session of the General Assembly as head of our Organization, may I also express Burundi's appreciation to Secretary-General António Guterres for his commitment to the values of peace, security and development.

Patience is a virtue that climate change does not recognize. The devastating effects it has fuelled have permeated virtually all conversations in this venue and ushered in this very session. The names of Irma and Maria, in the meteorological field at least, will forever connote total destruction. I therefore extend our most sincere condolences to the countries and regions of the Caribbean that have been severely affected by these hurricanes. We also express Burundi's solidarity with Mexico, stricken this week by an earthquake. We stand wholeheartedly with all these countries and their peoples.

The climatic disturbances of recent times are again sounding the alarm, urging all States to assume their collective duty to combat global warming and to implement without delay the commitments of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We believe that no State may shirk its responsibility to that end, whatever its size, shape or place on the map of the world. We must work together, for we are all in the same boat. If we wish to attain the objective of containing the average temperature rise on the planet below 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels and pursue measures to limit temperature increases to 1.5°C vis-à-vis pre-industrial

levels, we need to act today because tomorrow will be too late.

In implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Burundi is continuing its path of social inclusion and shared economic growth. It cannot do otherwise, since these two aspects are key pillars of the development policy advocated through Vision 2025. To that end, our country counts on the cooperation of friendly States and other international partners. Unfortunately, the sanctions adopted by the European Union against Burundi are not contributing to the realization of these plans of great importance for the Burundian people, because they deprive the country of necessary resources. Thus, the attainment of the 2030 Agenda and the objectives of the African Union Agenda 2063 is compromised as a result of these sanctions.

We also believe that sanctions unilaterally imposed against developing States in general, and in Africa in particular, should be banned from the international system, since they perpetuate historical injustices and violate the sacrosanct principle of equal sovereignty. Like the African Union, Burundi therefore rejects and condemns the sanctions imposed on Burundi and other African countries.

In the field of migration, we must work together to find solutions to the root causes of population movements, made up mostly of young people, from countries of the South to the North. We need to ensure conditions of humane migration in order to protect migrants, who contribute to the well-being of the host communities through their multifaceted contributions to economic activity.

The apocalyptic scenes in the Mediterranean Sea strike at our consciences as human beings. The reasons for migration must be explained and we must all understand them if we are to find appropriate solutions. It is regrettable that migration is increasingly being met with a resurgence of racism, rejection of the other and, often, even acts of rare violence against migrants. Likewise, racist populism is becoming increasingly prominent and gradually undermining the paradigms on which certain so-called advanced societies have long rested.

Migration is sometimes the result of trafficking in human beings. The victims are doubly affected, since in addition to being wrenched from their countries of origin, they are mistreated in the host countries. That is unacceptable. Consequently, we advocate strengthened

international cooperation in that area so as to build a more just world.

At the political level, our country reiterates, as it has done repeatedly, its position in consonance with the Charter of the United Nations. All States Members of the United Nations are sovereign Powers, and their sovereignty is equal. We call for reining in those States that continue in the twenty-first century to believe that they have the right to intervene in the internal affairs of other States, especially developing countries. We thank the Security Council, which, in the case of Burundi, has reaffirmed respect for its sovereignty in its various resolutions and presidential statements. We can never say it enough — Burundi believes that non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and respect for their territorial integrity and sovereignty constitute the pillars of a balanced international system under the Charter of the United Nations. Those principles are not negotiable. Today more than ever, Burundi stands ready to defend them at any price.

Recently, human rights have become another tool of domination. As a universal concept broadly elaborated upon in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant international instruments, human rights have been increasingly exploited by several States that, if not mindful of their actions, will divert the Human Rights Council from the goals entrusted to it by the General Assembly. Some members have become accustomed to obtaining, through the Human Rights Council and other mechanisms established by the latter, resolutions aimed at undermining the peace and security of the States that they wish to harm. The recent report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Burundi (A/HRC/36/54) constitutes the ultimate proof of the Council's manipulation by certain small groups. Burundi reiterates that it is ready to cooperate with the relevant United Nations bodies, but on the condition that such cooperation be based on clear, fair and predictable foundations that, above all, respect the choices made by the Burundians themselves in the areas of governance and development.

With regard to the inter-Burundian dialogue and the external component, only a short time ago the Government of the Republic of Burundi received a visit from the facilitation team to follow up on consultations and resume discussions. Burundi's positions were made known to the facilitation team. We are waiting for the facilitation to call for the next meeting, at which the delegations will have their voices heard.

Burundi has asked its refugees to return. Our appeal, which we reiterate here and now, has also been made to neighbouring countries so as to facilitate their repatriation. Today, the repatriation movement continues apace, with the arrival of approximately 1,700 citizens who found refuge in Tanzania and 3,000 returning from Rwanda. They are joining tens of thousands of others who have returned over the past several months, as well as those who would like to return. We thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration for their cooperation in facilitating those return movements. We take this opportunity to ask that unscrupulous Human Rights Council officials end the unsavoury practice of encouraging refugees not to return.

At the same time, we call on the United Nations to continue to monitor the situation of Burundian refugees in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries, in full compliance with the relevant provisions of the Geneva Conventions. We deplore the shooting that took place a week ago in Kamanyola, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, resulting in the deaths of 38 Burundian refugees, at least one officer of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, and more than 120 wounded. Once again, we invite the refugees to return home.

Burundi has joined other States in combating terrorism, with 5,400 troops in Somalia within the framework of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Burundi has been the second-largest troop-contributing country in Somalia for the past 10 years. Burundi is concerned about the continued reduction in support for AMISOM, especially at a time when an important campaign has been planned. The successes of the past several years cannot be sacrificed to self-interest. That would run contrary to the oath taken by all partners, which have repeatedly stated that terrorism is a global threat.

In pursuing its contribution to world peace and security, Burundi participates in peacekeeping operations in the brotherly country of the Central African Republic, and its police units are deployed in Côte d'Ivoire and Haiti. Burundi believes that the

efforts and sacrifices made by others must be rightly acknowledged in all cases.

If there is one recurring topic of debate in this Hall, it is that of the reform of the United Nations, and in particular the Security Council. Burundi supports all approaches aimed at fostering a constructive interaction, open to all, between the States Members of our Organization, on the one hand, and the Secretary-General on the other. Burundi supports the structural reform of the United Nations pursuant to the initiative taken at the high-level event on 18 September. It is necessary to consider the necessary reforms with the goal of improving the functioning of organs including the Security Council and the General Assembly. That will bring the bodies concerned in line with the realities of the twenty-first century.

It is clear that by dint of pouring new wine into old wineskins, we wind up bursting the latter. We must be firm in our conviction that, 72 years after its establishment, the United Nations is in need of a complete face-lift. Concerning reform of the Security Council in particular, Burundi supports the shared African stance known as the Ezulwini Consensus. It is high time that we correct the injustices of the past and allow the equitable participation of all continents in the governance of international peace and security.

With regard to international issues, Burundi welcomes the return of the Kingdom of Morocco to the fold of the African Union so that we can build a strong and prosperous continent together. With regard to Western Sahara, Burundi supports the decisions and resolutions adopted by the relevant United Nations bodies.

We call for the unconditional lifting of the economic blockade against Cuba without delay. The Cuban people have suffered under unjust measures that were adopted during the Cold War era for primarily ideological reasons and can no longer be justified today.

Similarly, in the case of Venezuela, we call on the international community to take measures that promote national cohesion and not social disruption.

Lastly, I wish the General Assembly every success at this session.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.



General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

22nd plenary meeting
Saturday, 23 September 2017, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 6.15 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)**General debate**

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Yacoubou, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration and Nigeriens Abroad of the Republic of the Niger.

Mr. Yacoubou (Niger) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, as well as my best wishes for your success. I would also like to congratulate the new Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and wish him every success in his mission. The Niger assures him of its full support.

The present session is taking place in a specific context, marked by the deterioration of the security situation in some Member States and, recently, by the destruction caused by hurricanes in others. To those affected countries, I would like to reiterate our solidarity and compassion. For those who have the flaw of forgetting or neglecting nature, it has reminded us that often it can be indomitable and has shown us that climate change can at times bring disaster and irremediable losses. We must therefore be aware and resolute in our conviction that new norms of production and consumption are being imposed on us.

The Niger is aware that each country is responsible for its own development and each person for his own

destiny. However, the most vulnerable countries — I am speaking of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States — deserve the support and assistance of the more affluent nations. Cooperation and solidarity are essential pillars of our common Organization. It is an original commitment of all Member States to work together so that all peoples can attain a decent standard of living.

That is why, while recognizing some positive developments, it is important for the States Members of the United Nations to make a greater commitment to partnership and cooperation in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to combat inequalities among and within States. In that connection, the Niger stresses the imperative need for effective mobilization of the resources needed to finance development, in accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Plan.

For its part, and to give meaning to the Niger people's struggle for prosperity and shared progress, the Government of the Niger has successfully carried out the Economic and Social Development Plan 2012-2015 and has just adopted a second plan for 2017 to 2021. That plan takes into account the main trends of the Renaissance Programme Act 2 of His Excellency Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of the Niger, and of the Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth Strategy, Niger 2035. It was designed to continue and amplify the Government's efforts to face the immense challenges to our development. It is an expression of our determination to improve, substantially

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and sustainably, the basic social indicators, guarantee universal rights, realize food self-sufficiency, protect the environment, build strong democratic institutions, defend the integrity of our territory and ensure the security of goods and people throughout the national territory. It also takes into account the main features of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and those of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Very opportunely, that plan will be presented to the Niger's technical and financial partners at a donor round table in Paris from 11 to 13 December 2017, under the patronage of the President of the Republic of the Niger. The Niger will mobilize to produce the maximum amount of internal resources to finance the plan, but it also knows it can count on the active solidarity of its development partners. I therefore appeal to States and the private sector that believe in our potential to be a partner in that project.

I have just mentioned our development challenges and our responses to them. But our country and all the countries of the Sahel face significant security challenges. In reality, they are strategic threats that may even jeopardize the existence of our States. The Niger is facing three hotbeds of threats.

The first is related to the situation in Libya. Without a Government exercising control over the whole territory, with dozens of militias, terrorist groups and all kinds of traffickers and a process in difficulty, the situation is of concern not only for the Libyans but also for neighbouring countries such as the Niger. Because of the uncontrolled movement of arms of all calibres, armed groups have become direct threats to both the Libyan people and neighbouring countries. Until that country is stabilized, we will have no guarantee that the Sahelo-Saharan space will not continue to face violent upheavals.

The Niger calls on the entire international community to genuinely commit to the restoration of a democratic order in Libya. The Niger has only one agenda in Libya — peace. That is why we believe that we must already be supporting the process of revising the Libyan Political Agreement. We call on all parties to make every effort to ensure that the Libyans themselves are masters of their political destiny; that reconciliation is inclusive and excludes groups terrorists; that the army is unified and national; that militias are disarmed and terrorist groups neutralized; and, lastly, that the referendum and electoral process

is undertaken on the basis of a new constitution and consensual electoral laws.

The second threat that we face is linked to ongoing presence of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin. For more than two years, in synergy with Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria, we have been fighting hard against the terrorist group Boko Haram. That barbarous group, which has claimed several thousand victims, is today considered one of the most cruel of recent years.

Thanks to the Multinational Joint Task Force, we have gained meaningful victories and fear has changed sides. Today we have considerably reduced the offensive and harmful capacities of Boko Haram. It is no longer possible for that criminal organization to control and administer, as it did so easily before, any locality in any one of our countries. However, even though they are weakened and wandering, elements of Boko Haram still remain dangerous. They organize suicide attacks by young girls forced to become human bombs or sex slaves, and engage in racketeering and kidnappings. In that connection, I wish to recall the 39 women and children abducted last July in the Niger by the terrorist group Boko Haram. The Government of the Niger remains strongly engaged and mobilized until their liberation.

The third threat, and by far the most worrying for us, is the situation in northern Mali. We must resolve two questions there. The first concerns the implementation of the Algiers peace agreements, and the second concerns fight against terrorist groups and traffickers.

From our point of view, the most important of those two issues is the fight against terrorist groups and traffickers. Until they are defeated, it will be difficult to implement the peace agreements or to hope for the restoration of the authority of the Malian State throughout its national territory. Therefore our primary objective is the eradication of those groups and the destruction of all trafficking that has become the source of their financing. That is why the member countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel) decided to set up a joint armed force.

Despite the commitment and determination of the G-5 Sahel member States, we remain deeply concerned by the weak mobilization of the international community to make that force operational. The Niger is convinced that the force will make it possible to impose the conditions for an irreversible balance of power in favour of peace and stability in Mali and therefore

throughout the Sahel. I therefore call for a real start so that we can make the necessary decisions. The Niger calls on the Security Council to adopt a new resolution that foresees a commitment of our forces under Chapter VII and to provide a mechanism for predictable and sustainable financing. Moreover, it is simply a matter of reorienting existing resources to enable the force to achieve its objectives.

What is at stake in the Sahel is a fight not only for the peace and security of the region, but also for international peace and security. Failing to help the G-5 Sahel and leaving the situation in Mali to deteriorate even further would be a mistake that the Member States should not commit. I would therefore like to thank all partners who already have announced their contribution to the operationalization of the G-5 Sahel joint force. The Niger welcomes the recent consultations undertaken by the Secretary-General and encourages him to continue his efforts to enable the deployment of the force.

With regard to peacekeeping operations, is it not time for the United Nations to question their effectiveness and to learn lessons from the shortcomings and failures observed here and there? Indeed, the nature of and actors in those conflicts have changed. We are dealing with non-State actors resorting to asymmetric actions for which peacekeeping missions are neither adapted nor prepared. That is why the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali has become one of the deadliest United Nations missions today. This it is important to review those missions with regard to their composition, their armaments and, especially, their mandate.

In discussing the issue of terrorism and the determined fight that our defence and security forces are waging, I would like to say here that the Niger will remain eternally grateful for the sacrifice of its daughters and sons who, with courage and honour, are fighting to preserve and safeguard the integrity of our country. We are certainly paying a heavy price for this fight, but the Niger will continue to play its role and live up to its duty to ensure that never again will any terrorist or criminal organization be able to occupy or take control of any part of our territory. That is why the Government will not stint on its considerable efforts to ensure that our forces take control and that their capacities are boosted. We will never let up in our determination, and I know we will win this war because our cause is noble.

Every year thousands of migrants throughout the world put themselves in danger to seek a better life, and the deserts and oceans of the world have become open-air cemeteries. Irregular migrants, victims of criminal smugglers with neither faith nor law, should be protected. The Niger, essentially a transit country, reaffirms its determination to fight the irregular migration networks and will continue to do everything possible to attack the root causes of such migration. That is the meaning of the plan that our country presented at the European Union-African Union Valletta Summit on Migration.

I have mentioned the security situation in western and eastern Niger. I would like to recall here that as a result of those conflicts, our country, although among the poorest in the world, is hosting more than 200,000 refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees. For the Niger, what is most important today is to get past those emergencies so as to launch socioeconomic recovery in the areas affected by those conflicts. We need to move from humanitarian issues to development.

Turning to certain international issues, I recall that the Niger is in solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom and independence. Our position remains unswerving support for the just and definitive resolution of that question, guaranteeing the creation of a sovereign State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The abuses against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar are unacceptable. Such serious and massive violations of human rights must be punished. The Niger unequivocally condemns those atrocities.

The Niger, a State party to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, will respect its commitments. We are convinced that there is no alternative for saving our planet and especially for preserving it for future generations. The Paris Agreement is not only the realization of our awareness, but also proof of our shared responsibility before history. Taking a step backward is not possible unless one believes that the fate of the Earth and of humankind is not concern for everybody.

The Niger urges the United States of America and Cuba to persevere in the constructive dialogue that had begun between the two countries until relations between the two are normalized and the embargo is fully lifted.

The issue of disarmament is a crucial. It deserves special attention to enhance trust among States. The

Niger strongly supports the actions undertaken by the United Nations with a view to bringing about general and complete disarmament with regard to both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons.

The new challenges generated by globalization, the transformations that have affected international relations for decades and the need to take into account new geopolitical dimensions, particularly in regard to Africa, require that we deal with the crucial issue of the reform of United Nations organs. In accordance with the Ezulwini Consensus, Niger calls for the composition of the Security Council to be reviewed, for the General Assembly to be revitalized and for the United Nations to remain a democratic Organization that enshrines the sovereign equality of States, not a tiered organization in which the powerful and the weak have different rights.

To conclude my remarks before the Assembly, I would like to reaffirm that at every opportunity and before every challenge, my country, the Niger, will always rise to play its proper role to promote and defend peace, to eradicate poverty and inequality and to preserve our environment. We are fully aware of our responsibilities to change our own fate and contribute to making the world safe and better. We assume these responsibilities fully and in a determined manner.

May God bless the Niger and the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Elvin Nimrod, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Legal Affairs, Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs and Local Government of Grenada.

Mr. Nimrod (Grenada): I bring warmest greetings from Grenada's Prime Minister, the Honourable Keith Mitchell. Prime Minister Mitchell sincerely believes in the work of the General Assembly and is absent only because he believes that, as Chairman of the Caribbean Community, his presence in the region allows his colleague Prime Ministers to travel to New York to plead the cases of their hurricane-stricken countries.

Our hearts and prayers go out to all the victims in our Caribbean region, in Mexico and across the world who are presently suffering the adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters. Within the last few weeks, our fellow members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the Caribbean small States of Barbuda and the Commonwealth of Dominica were ravaged by hurricanes Irma and Maria, which caused near-total destruction and the loss of many

lives. Our hearts also go out to the people of Cuba, with whom our region shares a very special friendship. I implore the international community to recognize without delay our responsibility to assist all those affected by natural disasters.

I join those before me in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election as President of this international organ. I am confident in your stewardship and assure you of my delegation's cooperation and support. I also take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, for his able stewardship of the Assembly's seventy-first session.

I also wish to thank both you and Secretary-General Guterres for your leadership and willingness to serve as guardians of the spirit of our Charter of the United Nations. I believe there is value in repeating your astute and entirely relevant observation that the Charter makes only five references to war, while peace is referenced 47 times.

Over the next few minutes, I will endeavour to offer Grenada's interpretation of what it means to strive for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet, the theme for this session.

I would like to say a few words on climate change. I am sure that almost every speaker here mentioned something about climate change, because, as we all know, it is a very relevant and topical subject. Certainly, based on recent activities in the Atlantic, we just cannot dispute that the climate is changing. In fact, 97 per cent of actively publishing climate scientists agree that climate change is due to human activities. For those who question the veracity of that science, the cluster of extreme weather events over the past few years ought to suffice for sounding the alarm.

Extreme weather events disproportionately affect our planet's most vulnerable, such as women, children and the elderly. Therefore, Grenada advocates that special attention be paid to those groups. As we assess the physical damage caused by such disasters, let us never forget the psychological toll they take on survivors.

We reiterate Grenada's commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Speaking in his capacity as Chair of the World Bank's Small States Forum in June, Grenada's Prime Minister lamented the withdrawal of key partners from the Agreement.

Therefore, we encourage them to reconsider. The Government of Grenada has adopted an ambitious Blue Growth agenda to take advantage of our vast maritime territory and its countless resources. Grenada aims to be the beacon of sustainable development for maritime States around the world. Our relatively small size makes it an interesting and achievable project. Our Blue Growth master plan offers many opportunities for collaboration.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has emphasized the need to advance measures to develop sustainable ocean-based economies in the Caribbean. The word "Caribbean" reminds us of beautiful beaches, such as the world-famous Grand Anse beach in Grenada. Our recent endeavours aim to use our maritime waters in a sustainable manner, governed by robust policies in our people's interest.

I previously alluded to the many variables that influence the sustainability of our planet. Small States such as Grenada and other CARICOM countries have to battle to maintain our access to financial markets. In March, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) published a report titled, "Recent trends in correspondent banking relationships", which highlights some of the challenges facing the financial institutions and Governments of small States. Observing that the number of correspondent banking relationships has decreased, the IMF anticipates a negative effect on global trade and economic activity this year. Furthermore, in the specific cases of Grenada and the rest of CARICOM, the high cost of compliance with the international tax agenda was underscored at the Ninth General Meeting between the United Nations system and the Caribbean Community in July.

Added to the threat of lost correspondent banking relationships, we also have to deal with the unilateral and often unfounded blacklisting of our institutions as money launderers and tax havens. Grenada has worked tirelessly to sign tax information exchange agreements and has signed 14 of those agreements since 2010. It pains us as policy-makers when we expend our limited resources to comply with rules, only to face unjust consequences when we are quite evidently in compliance. There are no easy answers to those challenges, but I urge our partners to desist from draconian approaches to such matters when dealing with vulnerable small developing States such as ours.

Grenada also supports resolution 70/5, which calls for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba. We also believe that renewed dialogue may augur well for the discovery of a mutually acceptable solution for both parties.

Lastly, on finance, I am proud to report that Grenada's structural adjustment programme has been highly commended locally, regionally and internationally. In May, the IMF reported that

"Grenada has continued with steadfast implementation of reforms and made progress toward achieving the key program goals."

Through the leadership and wisdom of our Prime Minister and the sacrifices of the Grenadian people, Grenada's economy is on solid footing today. Grenada's thriving economy is proof that the structural adjustments are not inherently bad. Investment, both foreign and local, is at its highest levels in recent years. Although we are cautious to declare victory, we are very confident that we are headed in the right direction.

Grenada believes that all 7 billion of our planet's humans are entitled to certain fundamental human rights. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights is unambiguous. We should all be guided by article 1 of the Declaration, which states that all humans are born free and equal.

On the issue of international security, Grenada continues to work with our international partners in the interest of world peace. Grenada is active and compliant numerous matters of international security. Grenada views the situation on the Korean peninsula with great trepidation and the hope that the conflict will be resolved peacefully. The proliferation of nuclear weapons is inherently destructive and serves no useful purpose for humankind. Therefore, Grenada urges its friends and allies to desist from all development and testing of such weapons. Each year, \$105 billion are spent on developing nuclear weapons. That amounts to around \$12 million per hour. If we are willing to make the shift from destruction to construction, the people of Barbuda, Dominica, Cuba, Mexico and other countries suffering from recent disasters will be forever grateful to the world.

Grenada remains concerned by recent political and social developments in Venezuela. In his capacity as Chair of CARICOM, Grenada's Prime Minister has offered CARICOM's help in facilitation of dialogue

between the Government and the opposition in Venezuela. CARICOM's approach must necessarily be impartial. CARICOM will not attempt to dictate terms to either side. We seek to encourage meaningful dialogue on the premise that the Venezuelan people can come together to safeguard the future of all of Venezuela. In the meantime, Grenada believes in the art of diplomacy and the principle of respect for sovereignty.

Turning to matters of health, the year 2017 marks the tenth anniversary of the landmark signing by CARICOM Heads of Government of the Port of Spain Declaration on non-communicable diseases (NCDs). While some progress has been made in reducing NCDs, there is still much work left to be done. The Caribbean region has the highest burden of non-communicable diseases in the Americas. Therefore, we urge key allies to continue to partner with us as we attempt to correct that unfortunate reality.

Grenada has made important progress in controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS. Only 0.3 per cent of our population presently lives with the disease. The work of Grenada's National Infectious Disease Control Unit and our health-care practitioners and policymakers must be highly commended for their work in that regard. That work, however, is greatly supported by international assistance that is being depleted — as it already has been in some Caribbean countries — without foreseeable replenishment.

Grenada thanks the Global Fund, the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Pan American Health Organization and the German Development Bank for their assistance. I urge donors to be flexible in their relief responses. We cannot wait for data while our people suffer. The data will come eventually, but in the meantime, lives, families and communities are at stake.

I would like to close with the assurance that Grenada believes in the United Nations system. I have had the honour of representing the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique on several occasions at this noble institution. As I retire from active political life, I am very optimistic that the window is still open for us to leave a peaceful, habitable and prosperous planet for future generations. The challenges of our time are dynamic and continuous, and we would be remiss to put anything but our planet first.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Augustine Phillip Mahiga, Minister for Foreign

Affairs, East Africa, Regional and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over deliberations of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. My delegation pledges full support to you and your Bureau.

Allow me to convey warm fraternal greetings from His Excellency Mr. John Pombe Joseph Magufuli, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, who wished to be here but, due to other pressing commitments at home, is unable to attend this session of the Assembly. President Magufuli has sent me to assure the Assembly that his Government will continue to support the United Nations and its noble mandate to promote global peace, security, freedom and development. We also wish to extend Tanzania's unwavering support and cooperation to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, as he continues to discharge his duties.

My delegation pays tribute to your predecessor, Mr. President — His Excellency Ambassador Peter Thomson — for his exemplary leadership during the Assembly's seventy-first session. His tireless efforts in promoting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as his dedication to resolving the plight of refugees and migrants and reviving consultations on the reforms of the United Nations, particularly of the Security Council, will remain part of his legacy. We are confident that you and your team will advance from where he left off, as you pledged in your opening statement (see A/72/PV.1).

Today, the world is facing myriad challenges, which include new and old threats such as international terrorism and other international crimes, persistent poverty, hunger and climate change, as well as global inequalities in economic and social status among nations. Those challenges call for a common and urgent response by the entire United Nations system and the international community as a whole.

It is in that regard that my delegation welcomes the theme for this session "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". The theme is timely and welcomed, as most of our countries are adjusting their development strategies and plans to ensure the speedy and timely implementation of the Goals and targets enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet should

focus on ending poverty, promoting economic and social prosperity, addressing inequality and injustices, and tackling the adverse impacts of climate change. That can be achieved by successfully implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Cognizant of that fact, Tanzania has integrated the Sustainable Development Goals into the second phase of our five-year development plan for 2016 to 2021, which focuses on industrialization, on the basis of complementarity between the agricultural and industrial sectors. That plan is one of our tools for the realization of our National Development Vision 2025, which seeks to bring our country to middle-income status. In collaboration with our development partners and other stakeholders, we have developed frameworks for implementing the SDGs, which include communication and dissemination strategies on the SDGs to make the Goals understandable to everyone. Dissemination is in both English and Kiswahili, which is our national language, spoken by all Tanzanians. Sensitization workshops on SDGs are also being conducted for regional administrations and local Government authorities, so that the Goals can be mainstreamed in their local plans and budgets in order to directly involve and benefit ordinary people, who are the main focus of the 2030 Agenda.

Tanzania has set a target growth from an average of 7 per cent in 2015 to 10 per cent by 2020, in order to reach middle-income status by 2025. We also believe that such growth will encourage efforts to promote equality in society by reducing the unemployment rate from the current 10.3 per cent to 8 per cent and will also reduce the proportion of population below the poverty line. That growth can be achieved by, among other things, increasing employment in both rural and urban areas and providing financial support through soft loans to youth and women. Other measures include strengthening small and medium enterprises, securing fair taxation and fiscal regimes for business entities and restoring discipline and accountability. Fighting corruption, financial discipline and accountability in all sectors are the hallmarks of President Magufuli's Government.

Climate change has become an existential challenge to the entire planet Earth. All parts of the world are increasingly experiencing the adverse impact of climate change, manifested in persistent droughts, land degradation, coastal erosion, ocean temperature rise and extreme weather patterns such as cyclones, typhoons, hurricanes and floods. In Tanzania, for

instance, it is disheartening to witness the epic snows and glaciers of Kilimanjaro — the highest mountain in Africa — melting at an alarming rate.

Against that background, I would like to express my Government's heartfelt sympathies and condolences to our brothers and sisters in the Caribbean, South Asia, Mexico, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, the United States of America and all around the world who have recently been victims of the disastrous impact of climate change. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have lost their lives and those who have been dispossessed and displaced. For all of us, this should be a wake-up call and a reminder that climate change has no boundaries and can potentially wipe out economic and development achievements in the blink of an eye. Therefore, the sooner we act, the better chances we have to protect the planet Earth for the present and future generations.

It is fortunate that we have the Paris Agreement, which already entered into force in November 2016, to address this problem. To honour our joint efforts that gave birth to the Paris Agreement under the leadership of France, we should implement, in letter and spirit, all of its articles. Assistance to developing countries should go beyond mere mitigation measures and should target adaptation measures with built-in green technologies to control carbon emissions from the outset.

Violent conflicts continue to plague the world and to challenge the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. They claim thousands of lives and lead to massive displacements and flights of people in search of safer places. We need to invest more in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and mediation efforts by addressing the root causes, the precipitating and triggering factors of conflicts. Peacekeeping, peacebuilding and State-building are essential to the maintenance and consolidation of peace where peace has been secured. We commend the role of the United Nations in spearheading those peace initiatives.

Striving for peace should be a collective endeavour involving Governments, international organizations, regional blocs, non-State actors, religious groups, civil societies and individuals. Sustainable peace and security is prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development. In that regard, we commend our men and women in Blue Helmets who are sacrificing their lives to serve the heroic cause of peacekeeping. Tanzania,

with other countries, has been contributing troops to several United Nations peacekeeping missions. We have paid a high price through the loss of peacekeepers serving in different missions. It is only this week that Tanzania lost a soldier in the Democratic Republic of the Congo following an attack by the rebels of the Allied Democratic Forces. We condemn that cowardly act in the strongest possible terms.

Nonetheless, Tanzania remains steadfast and committed to contributing troops to United Nations peacekeeping missions. At the same time, we urge the Security Council to continue strengthening the operational capability of the Force Intervention Brigade in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo so that it can effectively deal with negative forces and asymmetrical warfare, which are manifesting in different war theatres in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Tanzania has maintained its record as a peaceful country upholding the rule of law, democracy and other principles of good governance. It has been a country of refuge for many decades. At the same time, Tanzania has been actively participating in regional and international peace initiatives, including the ongoing Burundi peace process, which has been supervised by the East African Community, facilitated by the former President of Tanzania, Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, and mediated by His Excellency President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda. The peace talks are still on track, although their pace is slow and halting. It is encouraging to note that in some parts of Burundi, the security situation has significantly improved to permit the voluntary return of some 12,000 refugees of the almost 250,000 refugees who have been in Tanzania since 2015. We appreciate the partnership we have had with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in protecting and assisting the refugees in our country.

Tanzania has also for decades been receiving and hosting refugees from pockets of troubled areas in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We trust that there will be full implementation of the 31 December 2016 peace agreement, with the promise of timely elections in that country. We urge the leadership of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to live up to that commitment and to issue an election calendar soon. In that connection, we urge the international community to extend both logistical and financial support to the Democratic Republic of the

Congo so that it can complete the registration of voters and expeditiously carry out the planned elections.

On the agenda of the General Assembly and the Security Council, there are two protracted problems that require decisive action. One is the issue of the self-determination of the Sahrawi people. With the return of Morocco into the African Union fold, expectations are high in Africa that negotiations on that issue, which is on the agenda of the Security Council, will receive renewed momentum and urgency.

On Palestine, we support the two-States solution—two States living side by side in peaceful coexistence. To that end, the elements of a viable State of Palestine must be ensured and respected. The long-stalled peace process in the Middle East must be rekindled with a series of acceptable confidence-building measures by both sides with the support and guarantee of the United Nations and the international community in its entirety.

In the Assembly, we have been calling for the cessation of economic, commercial, financial and other embargoes imposed on Cuba, without significant results. The intention of the United States to reverse the agreements between the two countries on normalizing relations is a setback to the progress that had been registered and applauded by all of us in the Assembly and beyond. Tanzania continues to call for the total removal of all embargoes on Cuba. The people-to-people contact that has started between the peoples of both Cuba and the United States should serve as building blocks for enduring peaceful good-neighbourliness in the spirit of dialogue and understanding.

After the end of the Cold War, there was a new dawn and bright prospects for both conventional and nuclear disarmament. The doctrine of nuclear deterrence was becoming obsolete, negotiations for the reduction of nuclear arsenals were making progress towards a nuclear ban treaty, including nuclear testing, and some aspirants to nuclear weapons abandoned their ambitions.

However, the recent developments in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have shattered these optimistic prospects. The world is being dragged back to nuclear brinkmanship. This is the most recent threat to international peace and security. Tanzania supports all relevant resolutions of the Security Council on the nuclear-weapons trends in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and calls for de-escalation of the

political warfare and propaganda, and for the renewal of dialogue under the auspices of the Six-Party Talks.

On the other hand, Tanzania commends the recent adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which puts nuclear weapons on the same legal ground as other weapons of mass destruction. We should all support the Treaty in order to increase our moral authority in the fight against nuclear-weapons proliferation.

The reforms of the United Nations to make the Organization more efficient and relevant in order to cope with new trends and challenges must be continuous and progressive. The latest initiative of the Secretary-General is a commendable effort that should have received consensual support from the entire United Nations membership. We hope that, in the process of implementing these latest reform proposals, the debates will be all-inclusive and progress will be made on the basis of consensus among the entire membership of the United Nations.

The delay in Security Council reform is indeed testing the political will of the key players on this serious matter, and the debate has now become routine and sterile. The status quo is undercutting the primary responsibility of the Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. Democratizing the Security Council is good for the Council and for the world in the twenty-first century.

In conclusion, I wish to return to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by making a clarion call to the United Nations and its Member States to implement the goals contained therein, in measured and agreed benchmarks and intervals. The economic and social benefits of well-implemented goals will enhance democracy, freedom and security at the national, regional and international levels, leaving no one behind.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mark Anthony Brantley, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Aviation of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Brantley (Saint Kitts and Nevis): I bring greetings from the Government and the people of the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis. I wish at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to assure you of my delegation's full support as you carry out your duties.

Permit me also to extend congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session. President Thomson ably steered the deliberations on many pressing matters during this past year. As a representative of Fiji, he proved once again that small island nations continue to make significant contributions to matters of global relevance.

I also extend a warm welcome to Secretary-General Guterres as he assumes leadership of the Organization. His Excellency has come to the helm at a critical time in our collective history, and we are confident that his competence, coupled with his political and diplomatic experience, will enable him to chart the course of the Organization towards a sustainable and peaceful future for all. I assure His Excellency of my Government's fullest support and commitment.

My delegation also expresses appreciation to former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his sterling service and wishes him well in his future endeavours.

The world has gathered here in New York at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly under the theme "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". The theme is comprehensive, yet simple; concise, yet inclusive; and it encompasses pivotal and pertinent areas for international reflection at this critical juncture in our history.

Permit me to begin where the theme ends — a sustainable planet. I choose to do so because of the experience that I and members of our Caribbean civilization had immediately prior to leaving our countries to attend this session of the General Assembly. In the space of two weeks, we braced ourselves for the three hurricanes Irma, Jose and Maria. Two of these, Irma and Maria, descended on our region as category 5 hurricanes and, in the case of Irma, as the most powerful storm in recorded history in the Atlantic. I pause to reflect on the fact that the hurricane season of 2017 is not yet over and that the Caribbean will face similar threats each and every year.

In the aftermath, we were faced with the tragic destruction of life, property and infrastructure in Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Saint Barthélemy, Saint Martin, Sint Maarten, the British Virgin Islands, the United States Virgin Islands, Cuba, the Turks and Caicos islands, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Guadeloupe and Dominica. Irma then made landfall

in Florida in the United States, where, like Hurricane Harvey before it in Texas and Louisiana, millions of people were subject to damage and destruction.

I have highlighted the various countries and territories that suffered the most devastation, but my own beloved country of Saint Kitts and Nevis was not without injury. We, too, saw damage to our power grid, our roads, our agriculture and fisheries sector and to the homes of our people. Indeed, on 19 September, the day we should have been celebrating the thirty-fourth anniversary of our independence as a nation, Saint Kitts and Nevis was locked down under assault from Hurricane Maria.

The carnage in a wide swath of the Caribbean is unimaginable. Lives have been lost, homes and infrastructure destroyed, economies reduced to tatters, and years of development wiped out; in the case of Barbuda, an entire island was evacuated and rendered uninhabited and uninhabitable for the first time in 300 years. It is worthy of note that the carnage caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria took but a few days. In just a few days and in many countries a mere few hours, the world had front-row seats to the most horrific destruction ever seen in our beloved Caribbean region.

We have in this Hall heard the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda speak solemnly of the utter destruction of Barbuda (see A/72/PV.14). It was only today that we stood in anguished silence as the Prime Minister of Dominica recounted the near total destruction of his beautiful country and the tragic loss of life (see A/72/PV.19). Their first-hand accounts would move even the coldest hearts to tears.

We today extend our deep condolences to our brothers and sisters and continue to keep them in our prayers. But even as we do so, we also remember the victims of the three horrific earthquakes in Mexico and those in Japan and New Zealand. Our thoughts and prayers are also with the Governments and the peoples of those countries.

The time has now come for the world to treat these phenomena not as natural disasters but as the man-made disasters that they are. The science is irrefutable. Our oceans continue to get warmer due to our continued abuse of our planet Earth. Warmer oceans feed and create horrific storms such as Irma and Maria. Now more than ever, we bear witness to the compelling need to support the call for a reduction in greenhouse-gas

emissions and all other actions and behaviours that aggravate the effects of climate change.

Climate change for us in the Caribbean is not a matter for academic rumination. The humanitarian crisis unfolding in the Caribbean in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria is stark testimony to the fact that climate change is not only real but poses an existential threat to our peoples, our countries and our civilization. The world has deliberated and negotiated. We have made commitments and signed multiple agreements, most recently the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, but the time for more urgent, concrete, tangible and collective action is now.

It is the most cruel irony of our times that we in the Caribbean, who are least responsible for climate change, are the ones most disastrously affected by it. We are not major polluters, but we bear the brunt of the effects of pollution. In every sense, small vulnerable States like Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and my own Saint Kitts and Nevis continue to be asked by the world to cash a cheque we did not write. In order to attain a sustainable planet, those most responsible for climate change through their greenhouse gas emissions and other environmentally harmful practices must shoulder the responsibility of arresting and ameliorating the consequences. We cannot continue to abuse our planet and expect to remain unscathed.

The people of Saint Kitts and Nevis call upon the global community to pledge itself to pursue renewable energy with greater alacrity. We must invest in better and stronger homes and buildings. We must grow our economies to allow us greater financial resilience and flexibility. The people of Saint Kitts and Nevis and of our Caribbean deserve and demand the same fundamental right to life and security of our way of life as others anywhere else. I ask the global community to lend its collective voice so that together we can create a glorious symphony for change — change that will ensure a sustainable planet for all. In this regard, I call on the community of nations to mobilize the resources necessary to ensure the speedy reconstruction of those countries devastated by Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

My delegation unreservedly condemns the sterile analysis of gross domestic product per capita, which has been used by international agencies to tell our small island developing States that we are now middle- and high-income countries and therefore locked out of accessing development assistance or affordable

financing. It is a travesty and a tragedy for the world community to witness such destruction caused by forces entirely outside the control of Caribbean nations and then refuse to allow those very nations access to the resources necessary to rebuild. There has to be a more sensible and just model that takes into account the special vulnerability of small island States.

Saint Kitts and Nevis therefore joins others in demanding that a vulnerability index be developed as part of the matrix for accessing development assistance. We of the Caribbean, already caught in the debt trap, cannot be forced to borrow commercially at high interest rates to rebuild destroyed lives after each disaster. This is and must be a moral imperative for us all in the wake of the destruction seen in the Caribbean.

And rebuild we must. Countries such as Dominica have no safe zones or other geographic areas to which populations can be relocated. A hurricane of the scale of Irma and Maria devastates entire countries. We of the Caribbean are a proud and resilient people. The world must not stand by and allow the evils of climate change to force Caribbean people to become climate refugees. We must rebuild, and we require the community of nations to partner with us in this rebuilding effort.

In the fight against the disastrous effects of climate change, allow me to commend the work of many international agencies and organizations, as well as non-governmental actors. My country is especially heartened by the work being undertaken by the Commonwealth and its leadership. It follows that if we are to achieve a sustainable planet, it requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. From the onset, there must be buy-in from all stakeholders. No one should be left out, and therefore this calls for inclusiveness, unity and appreciation of the input and contributions that all can make to achieving the world we want.

This brings me to the first part of our theme — focusing on people. There can be no debate that our people are our primary resource. It is no marvel, therefore, that Governments allocate a large percentage of their budgets to developing their human capital and expend great effort to ensure that they meet the basic needs of their populace. Governments that fail to provide for their people and that ill-treat, abuse and oppress their people must be rightly ostracized by the international community.

Our world comprises all kinds of people, but I wish to highlight the youth — a sector of all our populations

on which the global community must increase its focus. I commend the United Nations on its unflinching efforts to draw attention to our youth. Indeed, it was more than two decades ago that the General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

Young people constitute 18 per cent of the global population. Young people and children together account for nearly 40 per cent of the world's population. Young people are not just our future; they are our present. Globally, Governments must do all they can to provide institutions and opportunities for learning and development, create employment and prepare young people for and steer them towards entrepreneurial endeavours. But Governments cannot do it alone. We therefore use this forum to call upon the business community, as well as non-governmental agencies and actors, to provide our young people with viable options and opportunities for gainful employment and social and economic advancement. We cannot speak of attaining the Sustainable Development Goals without a focus on our youth.

A vital element of a sustainable planet is peace. It behoves us all, nations great and small, to work towards the achievement of that essential universal value. Regrettably, while in some countries citizens are forced to engage in a daily struggle for survival, braving the scorching sun and bitter cold to labour for less than \$1 per day, other countries are expending billions of dollars on developing weapons of war and mass destruction. While some Governments are allocating large sums to secure a future for their women and young people, others are investing in tools of war. While the budgets alone of some Governments will be inadequate to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, others are using multiple times those budgets in developing nuclear warheads. In order to attain a sustainable planet, our priorities must be synchronized, harmonized and synergized. Our goal must be the preservation and conservation not only of our natural resources, but also of our human resources.

My delegation condemns unreservedly the actions that have led to heightened tensions on the Korean peninsula and calls on all countries to respect and honour their solemn commitments under international law. We condemn all actions that encourage violence and disrupt peace. There can be no place in today's world for war and violence. We therefore join the

international community in demanding diplomacy and dialogue instead of sabre-rattling and warmongering.

Saint Kitts and Nevis stands proudly with our Caribbean and Latin American neighbours as a zone of peace and exhorts all members of the community of nations to expend every effort to create and promote peace.

The theme of the current session makes a clarion call not only to strive for peace, but also to strive for a decent life for all. No boy, no girl, no man, no woman, no person should be left behind. We must work together to reduce poverty and hunger, promote justice and equality, and ensure that our people have access to health care and economic opportunity. In that global effort, we must be inclusive and each and every country must be allowed to play its part. No one nation can do it alone. Human suffering anywhere is human suffering everywhere. We must build partnerships and ensure the contribution of all the populations of our planet Earth. All must be allowed to sit at the table of brotherhood and contribute to finding lasting solutions to the problems that we face.

In that regard, we call on the international community yet again to look at our dear friend, Taiwan — a modern country of 23 million people that has had tremendous successes in technology, agriculture, health, and renewable energy; a country that is a model of peace and security. Saint Kitts and Nevis has experienced first-hand the benefits of partnership with Taiwan. There is much that it can offer, and we lose collectively when we seek to isolate and prevent our fellow nations from having a seat at the international table. Saint Kitts and Nevis continues its unwavering support for the Government and the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to be included in the United Nations and other international agencies. There is much that we can learn from Taiwan, and we can no longer afford to ignore the voices of its 23 million people.

In equal measure, we call yet again for the lifting of the more than 50-year embargo against our Caribbean sister Cuba. The Cuban people are a noble people who have demonstrated their resilience despite insurmountable odds. Their leadership in health and humanitarian assistance to Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America is well known. The Cuban people ask only to be given a fair chance to live their lives in dignity and peace.

In closing, I acknowledge that the task ahead of navigating the many complex issues of the international community will not be easy. However, we remain firm believers in collective strength and collective effort. The journey to a sustainable planet and a future for all is attainable. Throughout history, we have achieved more together than we have ever achieved alone. Whether we are small islands; land-locked, mountainous, desert or ice-capped States; whether we are super-Powers or powerless, we are all better and the United Nations becomes a better Organization when we work together. Alone we can do little, but together we can achieve much.

The challenges that we face globally — from climate change to refugees to war and violence — require urgent action now. The world does not have the luxury of time. We have talked. We have debated. We have postulated and hypothesized. We have studied and analysed. We must now act. In that regard, I can find no more elegant prose than that of American civil-rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., who said:

“We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action.”

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first statement and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to speak in exercise of the right of reply in response to the statements delivered by the representatives of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

Both delegations accused Qatar of terrorism. Qatar has an excellent record in counter-terrorism and ranks high in that regard. Such allegations allude to a link between Qatar and terrorism. Those claims are false, baseless and part of the unlawful campaign against Qatar that started with hacking and piracy. Other Member States took similar steps against Qatar and resorted to religious rhetoric to back their claims.

Those countries are now frustrated and use commercial means to pressure Qatar.

In response to the statement of Saudi Arabia, I affirm that the State of Qatar has spared no effort in strengthening international action against terrorism. We are a principled member of various counter-terrorism forums and coalitions, including the Global Coalition against Da'esh and the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum. Qatar participated in a summit between Islamic countries and the United States of America and was among the first countries to implement the outcomes of that summit. We have also signed a memorandum of understanding with the United States to stop funding terrorism.

We tell those countries that accuse Qatar of supporting terrorism that they ought to follow our example. The State of Qatar has fully implemented the relevant Security Council resolutions. Our record has been commended in a number of United Nations reports, which stress the constructive role that Qatar is playing to support the United Nations in sustaining peace and providing humanitarian and development assistance, which promotes stability and contributes to eradicating terrorism.

The statement delivered by the representative of Bahrain included a number of contradictions. It is truly surprising to hear the representative of Bahrain, who used to commend Qatar, now turn to criticizing it. Bahrain's experience affects the stability of the entire region. We reject the claims made in Bahrain's statement, which are refuted by our excellent record and our commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and stability in our region.

It is very surprising to hear Bahrain accuse us of terrorism. We call on the Kingdom of Bahrain to work tirelessly to overcome its own internal problems. To that end, it should respect human rights and implement United Nations resolutions. It should also refrain from marginalizing sectors of its own population and flouting the rule of law. It needs to be very objective in dealing with its own internal problems. Fabricating problems and conflict with the State of Qatar to obscure its own domestic problems will not yield positive results.

The illegal steps taken against Qatar are unacceptable. Is it conceivable or reasonable to prevent students from attending to their studies? Is that not a violation of their human rights? The same might be asked of legislation that threatens citizens with

punishment simply for expressing their sympathy with Qatar? Such rhetoric fuels the campaign against Qatar. How can counter-terrorism succeed when we fuel such rhetoric?

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): I take the floor to exercise Pakistan's right of reply to a statement in the general debate earlier today (A/72/PV.19) in which the Foreign Minister of India indulged in an orgy of slander against my country. Her comments towards Pakistan betrayed the hostility of the Indian leadership towards Pakistan — hostility that we have endured for 70 long years. Repeating falsehoods year after year does not and cannot conceal or alter the truth.

But in her vitriol, India's Foreign Minister deliberately ignored the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir. Let me be clear. Jammu and Kashmir is not a part of India. It is recognized by the United Nations and the international community as disputed territory. I invite the Assembly and the Indian Foreign Minister to look at the United Nations maps. Therefore, India's military occupation of the state is illegal. The Security Council has, in more than a dozen resolutions, decided that the dispute must be resolved by enabling the people of Jammu and Kashmir to determine their own destiny through a United Nations-supervised plebiscite.

India accepted these United Nations resolutions, but has avoided implementing them through obfuscation, diversion, deceit and aggression. India's brutal occupation of Kashmir has killed more than 100,000 innocent Kashmiri children, women and men. Today this campaign of brutality continues, including the shooting and blinding of innocent Kashmiri children with pellet guns. Yet every day these Kashmiri children, women and youth come out on the streets to demand that India get out of occupied Kashmir.

India cannot hide behind semantics. Any inter-State dispute like that surrounding Kashmir is by definition an international dispute. If the parties fail to resolve a dispute, the United Nations and the international community have not only the right but the obligation to intervene and help resolve the dispute. In the case of Jammu and Kashmir, that obligation is explicit since the Security Council has been involved with this dispute since its very inception and has prescribed very specifically and precisely how the dispute should be resolved.

Security Council resolutions do not lapse with time, nor are they "overtaken", as the Indian Foreign

Minister put it. Law has no expiry date and morality has no sell-by date. India's posture is that of the predator. It cannot escape its legal and moral obligation to abide by the resolutions of the Security Council. Any other interpretation will open the door to the logic of force in international relations.

India now also refuses a bilateral dialogue with Pakistan, whether composite or comprehensive. The condition it imposes that first there must be an end to violence begs the question. Violence emanates first and foremost from India's occupation and brutal suppression of the people of Kashmir. Under the circumstances, my Prime Minister has proposed that the Secretary-General appoint a special representative or special envoy, as several of his predecessors did, to promote the implementation of relevant provisions of the Security Council resolutions.

At the same time, the United Nations should also take steps to investigate India's ongoing and massive violations of human rights in Kashmir and the impunity enjoyed by India's security forces, lift the draconian emergency laws and punish those responsible for the war crimes and genocide in Kashmir. If the international community wishes to avoid a dangerous escalation between India and Pakistan, it must call on India to halt its provocations and aggressive actions. It must end the ceasefire violations along the Line of Control. It must halt its sponsorship of terrorist groups inside Pakistan.

India's Foreign Minister has spoken much about terrorism. The United Nations should actually define terrorism, and in that definition we should include State terrorism. The Indian National Security Advisor has boasted how this State terrorism is being sponsored by India's spy agencies in my country, in what he has called a "double-squeeze strategy".

Pakistan has in its custody an Indian spy and intelligence officer, Kulbhushan Jadhav, who has confessed to India's support of terrorist activities in my country. In fact, India has considerable experience in the State sponsorship of terrorism in our region. It has sponsored and perpetrated terrorism and aggression against all its neighbours, creating terrorist groups, destabilizing and blockading neighbours to do its strategic building, and sponsoring subversion, sabotage and terrorism in various parts of Pakistan. All this establishes the fact that India is the mother of terrorism in South Asia.

India's proclivity for violence is also no secret. In the 70 years since its independence, India has been engaged in at least a dozen-plus instances of the use of force and continues to face 17 insurgencies in its own land. It has fought a war with or within each of its neighbours. The Indian Foreign Minister sought to denigrate my country's founding father, the Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. All I can say about India's current political luminaries is that they belong to a political organization that has the blood of thousands of Muslims of Gujarat on their hands. Today, that so-called democracy is the world's largest hypocrisy. That is the face of India's democracy.

India is ruled by a Government in which a racist and fascist ideology is firmly embedded. The leadership of this Government emanates from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sang, the same extremist group accused of assassinating Mahatma Gandhi. It is a Government that has appointed a fanatic as the Chief Minister of India's largest state, whose rallying cry to his mobs was: "If they kill even one Hindu, we will kill 100 Muslims". It is a Government that has allowed the lynching of Muslims.

All this is amply documented by international human rights organizations. Indeed, as one of India's most famous contemporary authors recently said,

"These horrific murders are only a symptom of a deeper malaise. Life is hell for the living too. Whole populations — millions of Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims and Christians — are being forced to live in terror, unsure of when and from where the assault will come", [and that] "[m]uch of what is in the air in India now is pure terror, in Kashmir, in other places".

The Indian Foreign Minister spoke about human rights, so let me ask: who is using pellet guns that are blinding unarmed protesters, including children and infants, in occupied Kashmir? Who is violating the fundamental rights, not only of the brave people of Kashmir, but of hundreds of millions of Indians? Who is using rape as an instrument of terror and of State policy to crush a popular and indigenous movement in the occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir?

In conclusion, let me say that Pakistan remains open to resuming a comprehensive dialogue with India to address all outstanding issues, especially that of Jammu and Kashmir, and to discuss measures to maintain peace and security. But this dialogue must

be accompanied by an end to India's campaign of subversion and State-sponsored terrorism in Pakistan.

Ms. Mohamed (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): In response to the Qatari allegations, I assert that the Kingdom of Bahrain and its brethren in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt — supported by several other countries — have exercised their sovereign right, in accordance with international law, to impose measures against Qatar, which violated an accord that, when violated in part, is considered to have been violated as a whole. The Kingdom of Bahrain has evidence that the State of Qatar violated that agreement and interfered in the internal affairs of the Kingdom in order to foment chaos and overturn our domestic rulings. Qatar is also threatening the social fabric of Bahrain by according Qatari nationality to many Bahraini families.

Since the boycott was first imposed by our four countries, Qatar has spread false allegations that we are violating the human rights of our citizens, although Qatar knows that the four countries, including the Kingdom of Bahrain, have taken measures to ensure that all humanitarian cases — whether with respect to education, health care or any other urgent matter — are given due consideration. The measures taken by our four countries are sovereign matters. Any country has the right to do so under international law.

If we are to talk about contradictions, Qatar refutes its own allegations about the boycott by claiming that it is not impacted thereby, that it is enjoying economic growth and other similar claims. That is Qatar's right, but it should not behave one way and then act in an entirely contradictory fashion. Qatar is seeking to exploit international forums for its own political interests.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has suffered a great deal under the policies of Qatar, which spurns good-neighbourliness despite our family ties. However, the State of Qatar has sought and continues to seek to foment chaos and instability in Bahrain by supporting militias and terrorist groups, either through espionage, financing or its media, which it has exploited especially since 2011 in order to spread false news and create chaos in Bahrain through more than 800 falsified broadcasts. It is hiding behind freedom of expression and freedom of the media, well aware that the Kingdom of Bahrain has a long-standing record of respect for freedom of the

media. We have a democratic system and a fully elected Parliament that, thanks to recent amendments, is able to carry out all its functions.

No such achievements exist in the State of Qatar. Its Constitution is riddled with flaws. It does not have a Parliament. We are not trying to compare Bahrain and Qatar. This is an internal affair and, unlike Qatar, we do not interfere in the internal affairs of others. We wish the people of Qatar well, but we believe that reform is part of the democratic process. We remind our brethren in Qatar that it is easy to accuse others, but they should first look to themselves before looking at others.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): We regret that Bahrain has attacked Qatar. Its allegations against us are false. Unjust measures have been taken against Qatar, in violation of human rights, freedom of expression and the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which is based on respect for human rights. One cannot counter terrorism without respecting human rights.

We have been accused of funding terrorism, but there is no substantiated evidence for these claims. These four countries have provided no evidence because there is no such evidence. Qatar is better than all four countries combined in the field of counter-terrorism. The boycott, of which Bahrain is a part, has led to violations of human rights, such as the separation of families. Some countries have even enacted laws to prosecute citizens who express their sympathy for Qatar.

Any allegation that Qatar has intervened and interfered in the internal affairs of these four countries is false and intended to obscure the fact that those four countries are interfering in our internal affairs and have launched campaigns that threaten the unity of the Qatari people. Against this background, we have advised these four countries to pay greater attention to their own unity and their own respect for human rights. Respect for human rights is the only guarantee for the stability of countries. To ensure the stability of the Gulf, we need cooperation among the Gulf States.

As we are not able to speak a third time in exercise of the right of reply, we shall submit further comments in writing.

The meeting rose at 8 p.m.



General Assembly

Seventy-second session

23rd plenary meeting
Monday, 25 September 2017, 9 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Lajčák (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (continued)

General debate

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rodolfo Nin Novoa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Mr. Nin Novoa (Uruguay) (spoke in Spanish): As we greet all delegations, we also welcome the holding of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. Uruguay is convinced that today more than ever we need to strengthen these bodies of international coordination and leadership. Failure to do so would be to abandon humankind to transnational powers that escape regulation and arbitrarily impose their rule, notwithstanding the full validity of national sovereignties, which, throughout the course of history, have shown great longevity and bravely responded to challenges.

By instituting the reforms necessary to adapt its structures and methodologies to a time that is very different from the one in which it was born, the United Nations should become stronger, and the General Assembly, its main body, should be given higher priority. This would be a worthwhile endeavour, given that the Assembly is and will continue to be the expression of a universal *demos*, which humankind must safeguard as the ideal for organizing peaceful coexistence on a global scale, where all States, large and small, are equally worthy and respected.

Uruguay's foreign policy has focused on certain traditional pillars that have governed its actions throughout history, such as democracy, the rule of law, respect for and promotion of human rights, the defence of multilateralism, and the commitment to dialogue and peace. These are the principles that our country has historically defended and actively promoted. Uruguay has made these pillars its State policy, supported by all its political parties regardless of the different ideological or programmatic orientations that alternate based on the rotation of power that is inherent to our idea of democracy. They represent a common heritage and a key chapter of the agreements entered into throughout our history that define our national identity.

Today, with the world facing a broad range of threats and challenges, Uruguay is resolved to make its voice heard and base its actions on the international stage on those cornerstones that have held up its architecture in a peaceful and democratic manner. The increase in armed conflicts, characterized by unprecedented violence, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the expansion in the trade of all types of weapons, the spread of terrorism, cyberattacks, hunger and the devastating effects of climate change make it more than ever necessary for the international community to make a strong commitment to addressing them.

At a time when many of these expressions of violence and devastation are the result of global causes, it would be injudicious to strive to impose painful or insufficiently local responses to such challenges. The international community must rise to the occasion, consolidate its frameworks for joint action and

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strengthen global governance in order to resolve these serious problems.

Today, millions of people are directly affected by violence and armed conflict. Hundreds of thousands have been killed and thousands of others injured, and millions of displaced persons have been forced to flee their homes and risk their lives in search of peace. We should never consent to idly stand by when faced with such tragedy and devastation, in the midst of an indifference out of which we are shaken only exceptionally, when a memorable image moves or strikes us. Such an image — and this is the greatest tragedy — may be sadly representative of the fate of tens or hundreds of thousands of human beings whose lives and sad destinies we will never know. “Wasted lives” was how Polish philosopher Zygmunt Bauman, the father of “liquid modernity”, described them in his outstanding essay. It is only right to recall here that the world bade Bauman farewell earlier this year.

Unfortunately, human trafficking networks, which take advantage of human despair and vulnerability, emerge in those contexts, promising people a non-existent future. In the face of this scourge, all countries gathered here must redouble their efforts to combat all forms of trafficking, including human trafficking. All States must cooperate in order to put an end to all such heinous practices, which denigrate their victims and strip them of their basic humanity in service of the interests of global criminal and terrorist networks, and in order to promote the growth and social development of nations.

Let us call a spade a spade: inequality remains the main cause of most of the difficulties and threats that we face. We all know that, with the current advances in science and technology, poverty and hunger are unacceptable, and issues stemming from poor organization and the inequitable distribution of power and national and international resources are the cause of their unjustifiable persistence. For that reason, we reiterate that the rule of law and development are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing. Both are therefore essential to sustainable development at the national and international levels.

Uruguay fully endorses the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the commitment to leave no one behind. It pledges its unqualified support for that commitment, without any preconditions. It is a commitment that can be undertaken in a straightforward

manner by a country such as ours, which throughout its history has made the fight against abandonment one of the marks of its identity and succeeded in building, from a relatively early stage, a reasonably integrated society with a significant degree of social cohesion, although not without having to confront challenges and difficulties.

In July, at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, my country, for the second year in a row, submitted its voluntary national report on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which involved carrying out a regular process of consultations and interinstitutional coordination with the participation of the Government, academia, civil society, the private sector and international organizations, with respect to its implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

However, there is an issue on the United Nations agenda that is even more vital for Uruguay — disarmament as a prelude to peace. The international community must be committed to actively seeking effective solutions to this global problem. The growing threat of terrorism and the challenge it poses to the international community as a whole, the risk of the potential use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups, and the acquisition and use of conventional weapons and the links of such weapons with transnational crime have made the failure to disarm one of the greatest threats facing humankind. It is therefore a matter of deep concern. Controlling the international arms trade is an urgent necessity, given that trafficking and arms deals with warring parties in conflicts contribute directly to the suffering and murder of civilians.

For that reason, the accession to and ratification of international instruments intended to protect civilians, such as the historic Arms Trade Treaty, are a great contribution to that end. And let me repeat here in the General Assembly something that has already been mentioned in the Security Council. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 74 per cent of the total volume of arms exports in the period 2011-2015 was carried out specifically by the five permanent members of the Security Council. Similarly, military spending in 2016 was \$1.69 trillion, which was higher than in 2015.

We should ask ourselves how many needs could have been met had those funds been redirected to

the economic and social development of countries. The possession of nuclear weapons and the delay in disarmament by the States that possess them also endanger and threaten the world's stability and human security. If the proliferation of nuclear weapons overtakes diplomacy, the consequences will be devastating. Diplomacy, diplomacy and more diplomacy: that is the path that we must take.

The use and threat of use of nuclear weapons constitute a crime against humankind and a serious violation of international law, including international humanitarian law, as well as of the Charter of the United Nations. The only guarantee against the use and threat of use of those weapons is their explicit prohibition and total elimination. Nevertheless, far from abandoning their weapons programmes, the nuclear Powers continue to improve and actively modernize their nuclear arsenals. Data from specialized organizations indicate that nine countries have more than 17,000 nuclear weapons, of which approximately 2,000 are on high alert, ready to be launched at a moment's notice.

Uruguay welcomes the success of the United Nations conference that negotiated a binding instrument to ban nuclear weapons and bring about their total elimination. It concluded with the adoption of the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, recently opened to all States for signature, and to which Uruguay has just acceded. In that regard, we call on all countries to sign the instrument, which aims to ensure a dignified life for future generations and avoid a humanitarian catastrophe.

As part of its concern about the development of nuclear weapons, Uruguay expresses its strong condemnation of North Korea's nuclear tests and ballistic-missile launches and urges that country to abandon its existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible way, putting an immediate end to all related activities, including launches using ballistic-missile technology, and other acts of provocation.

In the same vein, we urge that country to respect the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which it abandoned in 2003, and the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards regime. However, we also urge all countries, in particular the great United States, to avoid the verbal escalations that have always preceded major

tragedies throughout history and weigh every word in a responsible manner, eschewing all violent rhetoric. A dynamic of antagonism often makes it impossible to stick to the facts.

In addressing the 3rd meeting of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, our Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, made reference to "sleepwalking our way to war", inspired by the eloquent title recently used by the historian Christopher Clark to describe how human beings and nations marched into the tragedy of the First World War, dazed and confused by mutual misunderstandings and unheeded warnings. When they became aware of the outcome, it was too late.

Just three months before ending its term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Uruguay wishes to emphasize once again that it is firmly convinced of the importance of focusing its efforts on protecting civilian populations in all conflict zones by using different modalities, through peacekeeping operations and the delivery of humanitarian assistance, by, inter alia, protecting hospitals and medical personnel and denouncing flagrant violations of human rights.

In the current context of crisis, we wish to acknowledge the bravery and altruism of humanitarian personnel as they continue to assist, at the risk of their own lives, those in need in conflict situations. We understand that the best way to honour humanitarian workers, who have saved thousands of lives in numerous settings, is to devise successful policies and reach agreement within the framework of the United Nations to bring about the immediate cessation of attacks on civilians, while making possible the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in conflict situations. We are concerned at the increasing number of attacks on and deliberate bombings of civilians, humanitarian workers and civil infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and markets, all of which are serious human rights violations.

The ultimate atrocity is when defenceless human beings are attacked while they are assisting other defenceless human beings at the worst times and in the worst places. Not only should we emphatically condemn this, but we should also adopt resolutions to protect victims and bring perpetrators to justice. Uruguay once again calls for full compliance with Security Council resolutions, especially resolution 2286 (2016), and the establishment of effective mechanisms for its

implementation. I wish to reiterate that this kind of attack against civilian targets, disguised as collateral attacks, should never be tolerated.

It is undeniable that we are experiencing deep-seated changes in the kinds of conflicts we are seeing. The increasing presence of terrorist organizations and non-State actors spreads fear among populations and disproportionately undermines the rights of women and children. History has shown us that there is a constant pattern in terms of conflicts in the world, regardless of region or religion. Women and girls are those who suffer the consequences most. War invades their lives, threatening their sense of security.

In this context, as an elected member of the Security Council, a country with a long-standing participation in various peacekeeping operations and an active troop contributor, Uruguay is intent on fighting sexual exploitation and abuse in armed conflicts. We are deeply committed to the zero-tolerance policy. We reiterate our support for this policy and are working very hard to prevent new cases of abuse and sexual exploitation in peacekeeping operations, with the understanding that a single case is one too many.

For more than 50 years, Uruguay knew what it was like to be outside the most important decision-making body in the world. That is why we believe it is vital that the issues taken up by the Security Council be public knowledge for all Members of the United Nations. What is discussed there is of such importance that all States present here today should be aware of what goes on behind closed doors. That is why Uruguay will continue working towards more transparent and inclusive working methods in the United Nations within the framework of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, as well as in other multilateral contexts. As a signatory to the Charter of the United Nations, Uruguay emphasizes its commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations while committing itself to working tirelessly to sustain those principles, which we believe are vital for building a safer and more prosperous future.

We cannot even think of peace in the world if the international community does not make a serious commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation. Any progress in disarmament and non-proliferation — be it serious commitments; gradual, effective, specific steps forward; or results — must be welcomed and celebrated as a tremendous achievement of the United Nations.

We wish to conclude our statement by highlighting the overarching historical significance of the peace process that has been gaining ground in Colombia and putting an end to the armed conflicts that divided it, drowning it in pain and blood for many long decades. As Uruguayans, as Latin Americans and, in this case, as the then President of the Security Council, we are pleased and proud to have made a modest contribution to the building of peace in Colombia. This is the best example we have when we talk about specific results.

It is our Latin America that we have made a region of peace today. The great note of hope that has sounded when this ceasefire and the peace agreement were reached gives us the enthusiasm we need to take on the new and difficult missions in other parts of the world in which the way out often seems difficult to see. Latin America has single-mindedly rejected all attempts to resolve internal conflicts in Latin America, no matter how intense they are, through military intervention.

In the historical experience of our continent, such interventions have only left a trail of lasting violence, poverty and instability. Latin America is united as a block against interventionist war-mongering endeavours that are neither rational nor prudent.

I would like to reiterate once again our emphatic rejection of the unfair blockade which, after 55 years, is still looming over our sister Republic of Cuba, and we express our sympathy and condolences in connection with the victims of the hurricanes and earthquakes that recently affected the region.

In conclusion, achieving a sustainable planet and a decent life requires the effective use of existing resources so that we can live in peace and security and our legacy can be a habitable world for future generations.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States of the Holy See.

Archbishop Gallagher (Holy See): On behalf of His Holiness Pope Francis, I am pleased to congratulate Your Excellency on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to commend you on the choice of the theme for the general debate: "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet." It is a congenial topic for the Holy See. Pope Francis never tires of insisting on people first, especially those

who suffer, those who are excluded, marginalized or left behind.

The Catholic Church expresses the meaning of focusing on people in these words: the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ, because, indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in our hearts. Focusing on people means not only protecting them from heinous crimes, but also placing them ahead of all national and geopolitical interests and fulfilling all the international political commitments undertaken throughout the history of the United Nations relating to social and economic development, starting with those set forth in the Charter of the United Nations.

Always putting people first means protecting, at every stage and in every circumstance, the dignity of the person, human rights, fundamental freedoms and, in a specific way, the rights to life and to freedom of religion, from which all other rights flow. These two human rights are the common foundation of the pillars of peace, security and integral human development. They are indivisible from those other rights and fundamental freedoms relating to a dignified, spiritual, material and intellectual life for all citizens and their families, including, *inter alia*, the right to food, water, housing, a safe environment and work.

With the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the international community committed itself to effective measures to eradicate the root causes of various evils and indignities that many people in the world are facing today. Moments before the Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Pope Francis defined the Agenda as an important sign of hope. One of the fundamental reasons for this hope is that world leaders had agreed on a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity and were determined to end poverty and hunger in all their forms and manifestations and to ensure that all human beings could fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment. Their common resolve to leave no one behind articulates the core of this focus on people.

With regard to political commitments, Pope Francis has also urged the Organization and the international community not to fall into what could be called "declarationist nominalism". Accordingly, we must

guard against having soothed consciences and feeling good simply because we adopted the 2030 Agenda and other important international accords. On the contrary, we must not rest until our legal commitments have been truly fulfilled and our political promises kept when it comes to the lives of people. We must therefore take a hard and honest look at the principal challenges that the peoples of the world are facing today and will face tomorrow. With this in mind, responsible compliance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, as well as the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda, could be a way of focusing all countries and international organizations on working together for peace, setting aside the dangerous game of exchanging threats.

From this perspective, the Holy See sees the forthcoming reform and fine-tuning of the United Nations development system as an additional opportunity for placing people and their needs at the centre of our action. In so doing so, as Pope Francis reminded us in this Hall two years ago, we must allow them to be dignified agents of their own destiny (see A/70/PV.3).

Christian churches, in particular the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, celebrate together on 1 September the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation to heighten public awareness of their shared responsibility to take care of our common home and contribute to reversing environmental degradation. To mark the World Day of Prayer this year, Pope Francis and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I released a joint message affirming that the Earth was entrusted to us as a sublime gift and legacy for which all of us share responsibility. Our human dignity and welfare are deeply connected to our care for the whole of creation.

This call for responsible stewardship finds particular urgency before the deteriorating conditions of our common home and an often purely utilitarian world view concerning the things that surround us. Any harm done to the environment is harm done to humankind today and tomorrow. Therefore, the misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion, given that the deterioration of the planet affects, first and foremost, the many billions trapped in poverty or in conditions of environmental stress across the globe. This dramatic reality of exclusion and inequality must lead all of us to take stock of our shared and individual

responsibilities. The pressing call and challenge to care for creation invite all humankind to work unhesitatingly towards sustainable and integral development.

Improving climate conditions and the natural environment is possible only if we accept the need to change the way we perceive the world and thus our way of relating to it. Although our common home is falling into serious disrepair, we can reverse the trend of environmental degradation. Indeed, as Pope Francis emphasized in his encyclical *Laudato si'*, while we are capable of the worst, we are also capable of the best, rising above ourselves, choosing again what is good and making a new start.

The duty to prevent wars and violent conflicts is an essential component of the responsibility to protect. The Holy See therefore appreciates the Secretary-General's explicit and strong emphasis on preventive diplomacy and concurs with his assessment that the most serious shortcoming of the entire international community is the frequent inability to prevent crises. Prevention requires, first of all, restoring faith in the capacity of humankind for dialogue. An environment of trust is urgently needed. All countries should take a decisive and urgent step back from the present escalation of military preparations. The largest countries and those that have a stronger tradition of respecting human rights should be the first to perform generous actions of pacification. All diplomatic and political means of mediation should be engaged in order to avoid the unspeakable.

Allow me to recall the appeal of Pope Pius XII to all nations on 24 August 1939, on the eve of the Second World War:

"The way of justice is promoted by the strength of reason and not with the force of arms... The danger is imminent, but there is still time. Nothing is lost with peace. With war, everything is lost. May people come back to understand each other and take up again negotiations. By negotiating with good will and with respect for mutual rights, they will realize that sincere and active negotiations never preclude an honourable success."

In such a context, I would like to recall that a dozen years have passed since the historical gathering of world leaders in this Hall for the 2005 World Summit. Focusing on people, the Heads of State and Government of the Members of the Organization reached consensus on the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes

against humanity. There is no doubt that a collective political consensus is necessary, but a reflection on Articles 2, paragraph 7 and 39 of the Charter of the United Nations is also needed.

The Holy See therefore supports all initiatives designed to facilitate observing obligations under the responsibility to protect, but it would like to remind the international community once again that without a legal framework or fair respect of the international rule of law, the application of the principle is unfeasible.

The war in Yemen is causing a humanitarian catastrophe of apocalyptic proportions. The tragedy stemming from the war in Syria continues to grow every day. Involved stakeholders should sit at the United Nations negotiating table with the sole precondition that human rights law and principles be respected and that humanitarian access and assistance be allowed. At the same time, States, especially those that at some time in recent history have been directly or indirectly involved in the conflict, must undertake all means to reach a ceasefire, which is a first step towards peace.

The Holy See is particularly concerned about the political divisions and instability in Venezuela and its humanitarian crisis. In addition, the international community must address the complex political and diplomatic tensions in the Arabian peninsula, as well as the violence and the various humanitarian situations in the Middle East. We must all strive for an end to violence and for reaching a solution that can enable both Palestinians and Israelis alike to live at last in peace within clearly established and internationally recognized borders, thus implementing the two-State solution.

The ongoing violence and intense political tension in the Democratic Republic of the Congo necessitate an urgent and efficient commitment from all parties to finding a solution to the constitutional crisis. Furthermore, there is a need for greater public awareness of certain ongoing conflict situations with a view to reaching negotiated and peaceful solutions to them, especially in Ukraine, South Sudan and the Central African Republic, inter alia.

Along the same lines, as Pope Francis has stated, there is

"another kind of conflict that is not always so explicit and yet is silently killing millions of people.

Many of our societies experience a different kind of war as a result of the drug trade" (A/70/PV.3, p. 6).

The drug trade has joined other forms of corruption and has

"penetrated into every level of life — social, political, military, artistic and religious — and in many cases has given rise to a parallel structure that threatens the credibility of our institutions" (*ibid.*).

In a similar vein, the Holy See is concerned with the challenges of fighting corruption and terrorism and with promoting stable peace and a sustainable development in many countries of the world. The Holy See wishes to stress again that terrorism can be countered only by more cohesive and coherent measures at the international level: as terror knows no border, the international community must act as a whole.

The full protection of people is possible only with a durable peace. However, the protection of civilian populations must also be ensured during times of war. The recent gangrenous conflicts both weaken and reveal the shortcomings of the international order and cause inexplicable suffering, massive displacements, blatant violations of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms and extreme poverty. There is no worse man-made crisis than violent conflicts. They drive people forcibly to migrate or become refugees. They engender mass atrocities and crimes against humanity. Indeed, as Pope Francis told the Assembly, "War is the negation of all rights" (*ibid.*, p. 5).

The lamentable situation of the hundreds of millions of migrants and refugees fleeing from wars, persecution, natural disasters and extreme poverty, particularly in Nigeria, Myanmar, Somalia and countries of the sub-Saharan region, *inter alia*, is a great responsibility for all without exception.

Our common humanity compels us all, as Pope Francis has proposed, to welcome, protect, promote and integrate those who flee from such adverse conditions. These four actions are based on the proposition that migrants, despite many real or imagined challenges, are good for society, and on the principle of solidarity with those in need. In particular, they express our shared responsibility towards the victims of the genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity that the international community has failed

to prevent or stop, in blatant neglect of the principles of international law.

The Holy See will vigorously work to see these four concepts enshrined and reflected in the future Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees. The Holy See believes that these United Nations-led processes offer a unique opportunity to respond collectively to challenges through international cooperation and shared responsibility. The Holy See urges the international community to overcome the current political impasse and go beyond the negative sentiments that we face in opening safe, orderly and regular pathways for migration. In order to achieve the desired outcome, the contribution of political communities, civil society and all stakeholders is indispensable, each according to their respective responsibilities.

While some migrants may be motivated by the legitimate desire to improve their already acceptable situations, most would likely choose not to migrate if they enjoyed peace and economic security in their home countries. It is a basic human right to live in one's own country, but that right is effective only if the root causes that force people to migrate, such as wars and conflicts, mass atrocities and persecutions, and dire economic and environmental hardships, are met with adequate solutions. Indeed, if basic necessary conditions were met, people would not feel forced to leave their homes, making migration manageable and voluntary. The focus in negotiating the Compacts therefore should not be limited to stopping migrants in their tracks or confining refugees to camps, but, instead, it should address the causes that deprive them of living with dignity and force them to make life-threatening journeys. This should be our goal, and it should be a key part of the Global Compact for Migration.

Another great challenge facing the international community is trafficking in persons. At the root of this and other contemporary forms of slavery are wars and conflicts, extreme poverty, underdevelopment and exclusion, lack of education or employment opportunities and environmental catastrophes. But we ought to recognize that on the demand side of such criminal trafficking there is also a crass selfishness that reaches the unimaginable heights of moral irresponsibility in the case of the trafficking of children, organs, tissues and embryos and in so-called transplant tourism. Such execrable forms of trade are exacerbated by corruption on the part of public

officials and common people willing to do anything for financial gain. Indeed, the migration and refugee crises are today facilitating an increase in trafficking in persons and other contemporary forms of slavery.

The Holy See and the Catholic Church have long spoken out against the evil of trafficking in persons and, through the dedicated work of so many individuals and institutions, have sought to fight its root causes, care for the victims, raise awareness about this scourge and work with anyone and everyone to try to eliminate it. In an address on 10 April 2014, at the International Conference on Combating Human Trafficking, Pope Francis called trafficking in persons an "open wound on the body of contemporary society" and at the signing of the Universal Declaration Against Slavery, on 2 December 2014, he termed it an "atrocious scourge that is present throughout the world on a broad scale".

At the heart of this evil is the utter loss of respect for human dignity and the total indifference to the sufferings of fellow human beings. Modern slavery happens when people are treated as objects, which leads to their being deceived, raped, often sold and resold for various purposes, and in the end either killed or left devastated in mind and body, only to be finally thrown away or abandoned. By refocusing its attention on people and putting people first in its overall work, the Organization should unerringly support the fight against trafficking in persons and other contemporary forms of slavery.

Pope Francis calls on everyone, and especially the competent authorities, to address this heinous crime through effective legal instruments, punish those who benefit from it, assist in the healing and the reintegration of its victims and eradicate its root causes. The response must be commensurate with this great evil of our time.

The world is awash in all types of weapons, from nuclear weapons to small arms and light weapons. The arms trade, both licit and illicit, keeps on growing. The proliferation of arms, including weapons of mass destruction, among terrorist groups and other non-State actors has become a real danger. These trends are deeply worrying, but more disturbing still is the deep chasm that separates commitments made from actions taken in the field of disarmament and arms control. While everyone condemns the grave effects of arms proliferation, nothing has substantially changed on the ground, because, as Pope Francis has observed,

"[W]e say the words 'no more war!', but at the same time we manufacture weapons and sell them ... to those who are at war with one another".

This must change. The proliferation of weapons simply aggravates situations of conflict and results in unimaginable human suffering and material costs, profoundly undermining development, human rights and the search for lasting peace. Without greater international and regional cooperation, especially among weapon-producing States, in terms of strictly controlling and limiting the production and movement of weapons, a world free of wars and violent conflicts will surely remain an illusion.

When Pope Francis addressed the General Assembly two years ago today, he drew attention to the urgent need to

"work hard for a world free of nuclear weapons by implementing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in letter and in spirit, until such instruments are totally banned" (*ibid.*, p. 5).

In his 2017 World Day of Peace Message, Pope Francis once again made a plea for disarmament and for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, the proliferation of nuclear weapons continues to increase international tensions, as can be seen in the situation on the Korean peninsula. As history shows, regional and bilateral treaties on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons have been effective in establishing whole regions free from these weapons. It therefore seems all the more urgent that we invest in creating those circumstances that would facilitate the crafting of new bilateral and regional treaties.

The Holy See has signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and has already deposited its ratification document because it believes that it is an important contribution to the overall effort towards total and complete nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, that it represents progress toward the fulfilment of the commitment of the States parties to the Treaty to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and a step towards negotiating a general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. While much remains to be done for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to truly make a difference and fulfil its full promise, the Holy See

believes that it is one more blow on the anvil towards the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah:

"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again."

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Chair of the Delegation of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Guterres (Mozambique): I have the honour to address the seventy-second session of the General Assembly on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, who could not attend this gathering owing to other commitments at home. Allow me therefore to start by conveying President Nyusi's good wishes for a successful session of the Assembly, which is the highest forum for global political and diplomatic dialogue.

I would like to take this opportunity to join the speakers who preceded me in congratulating you, Sir, on your unanimous election to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I assure you of the full commitment of Mozambique to contributing to the realization of the goals we have all envisaged to achieve during this important session. We trust that your gifted leadership and diplomatic experience will add value to our endeavours and contribute to the success of the work of this session.

I wish equally to congratulate your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson of Fiji, for his stewardship and commitment to fulfilling the agenda at the last session of the General Assembly.

A special word of appreciation goes to His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, the Secretary-General, for the vision and leadership he has displayed in this, his first year in office. We believe that he is steering the Organization onto the right path in order to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness as it serves us, the Member States, in our quest to deliver on the ambitious goals we have set for our peoples. Only a strong and vibrant United Nations system can ensure that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its goals will deliver societies that are more inclusive, peaceful and prosperous than ever, without compromising the very existence of our planet.

Two years after we pledged our commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, the world remains

confronted with multiple and complex challenges that threaten to constrain the gains we made in fostering global peace and stability, stall and reverse the advances made in fostering social and economic well-being of our peoples, and cause irreversible damage to our planet. We therefore welcome the theme chosen for this session by the President of the General Assembly, namely, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", as it allows this body to reflect in a timely manner on how best to address the challenges before us. This reflection in a multilateral forum such as the General Assembly is essential if we are to coordinate and consolidate our approaches as we strive individually and collectively to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

The renewed focus on people should serve as a universal impetus for all the development actors to translate into practice actions that promote peace and the well-being of all humankind. It is worth recalling that our resolve is to make the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a framework that brings together the collective will to transform people's lives in a sustainable way by lifting them from poverty and promoting human dignity without neglecting peace, which is a critical factor in the attainment of sustainable development, based on the interplay of the economic, social and environmental pillars.

As we strive to accomplish these goals, we are challenged to find the ways and means to honour the commitments undertaken in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Only joint and complementary efforts in those three domains will enable us to build the necessary resilience at the national, regional and international levels commensurate with the challenges before us and in line with our aspiration of leaving no country behind.

The challenges we faced and the experiences we gained in the implementation of other globally agreed development goals in the past underline the need for greater commitment from our development partners to scale up and honour their assistance and for funding pledges made to support climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation, as well as disaster-prevention efforts in developing countries. This support is of paramount importance to mitigating the effects of climate variability, whose devastating effects have been laid bare in the last two months in several States Members of this body.

Furthermore, it is also clear that a robust and efficient United Nations system, together with a strong partnership between the Organization and the regional bodies, can play a catalytic role in accelerating national development and strengthening democratic political systems and institutions that can lead to more inclusive and peaceful societies. In that vein, we support the ongoing efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General to reform and reposition the United Nations development system with a view to making it more responsive to the development needs of its Members.

The overwhelming challenges of our times require bold and determined political will to achieve the results we seek. Mozambique reaffirms its unequivocal commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, since focusing on people has always been at the core of Mozambique's national development agenda. Accordingly, we have aligned our national development agenda to include the three dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which are now reflected in the five pillars of our national five-year plan, namely, consolidating national unity, peace and sovereignty; developing human and social capital; promoting employment, productivity and competitiveness; developing economic and social infrastructures; and ensuring sustainable and transparent management of natural resources and the environment.

Mozambique has created a multi-stakeholder national reference group that encompasses Government, civil society, the private sector and international cooperation partners for the management of the Sustainable Development Goals and is promoting capacity-building for its implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In the effort to consolidate national unity, peace and sovereignty, our focus on people leads us to strive to ensure that lasting peace and stability is a reality to all Mozambicans. Durable peace and stability therefore ranks as an overarching priority in our national agenda, as it is a crucial factor for the development and promotion of lasting human security in the broadest sense. Accordingly, the Government of Mozambique, under the leadership of President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, is striving for an inclusive dialogue with all political actors and civil society through both formal and informal mechanisms, including the Parliament. This inclusive approach is also used to engage Mozambicans in the conceptualization and implementation of the national development agenda.

Furthermore, our focus on people envisages not leaving anyone behind, which is one of the guiding precepts of our universal agenda. Therefore, particular attention is given to policies and strategies aimed at the protection and the full enjoyment of human rights, the promotion of gender equality and equity as well as the empowerment of women and youth, who constitute the majority of our people. Mozambique believes that our focus on people, peace, a decent life and a sustainable planet also requires a regional dimension, particularly in the context of a globalized world.

We are therefore encouraged by the contributions that regional and international multilateral mechanisms have made to prevent and manage conflicts and to promote peace and stability, in particular those under the Southern African Development Community, the African Union and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, to which we are proud to belong. We believe that mechanisms that promote peace and prosperity should also constitute a strong platform of action aimed at fostering dialogue among civilizations, an unquestionable tool in the promotion of a culture of tolerance, peaceful coexistence and a sustainable world. We pledge to continue to play our role in these endeavours.

Our resolve to focus on people entails that we address with a sense of urgency the root causes of the increase in unregulated migration and the massive flows of refugees, two dimensions of the human crises that we are confronted with in modern times. This regrettable reality is in great part a consequence of a succession of unresolved crises or poorly settled conflict situations in relation to which the international community bears a responsibility. In that connection, we risk achieving an ineffective and fragile peace if the international community remains focused on short-term and ad hoc measures that leave scope for the recurrence of the same intractable problems at a later stage. The international community should come together to redouble efforts and to build consensus to prevent the senseless loss of lives. We need to adopt measures to reduce people's vulnerabilities, complemented by actions that address the complex and structural causes of these mass movements, such as conflicts and political, social and economic exclusion.

A focus on people on a sustainable planet also requires urgent attention to climate change. Today more than ever before, the challenges posed by the adverse impact of climate change are noticeable. Every

day we are confronted by the destructive impact of climate change, challenging those who continue to harbour doubts about the effects of human activities on the environment and on the climate. The recent devastating effects of the hurricanes, the mudslides and the earthquake that affected millions of people in the Caribbean region, the United States of America, Sierra Leone and Mexico are vivid reminders of the scale of the natural disaster threats we face.

I would like to seize this opportunity to convey to the affected people and countries a message of solidarity and sympathy on behalf of the people and the Government of Mozambique. The great human losses and the destruction of infrastructure as a result of the scale and ferocity of these storms prove once again that, beyond our convictions, we need to reflect and to act as a common front to face the menaces arising from climatic change. To that end, we reaffirm the importance of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change as an instrument to strengthen the much-needed partnerships for adaptation and mitigation measures.

The positive dynamics generated by the major development commitments made by the international community in 2015 have been overshadowed by the worrying signs of the eruption of political instability, the prevailing inter- and intra-State conflicts, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, the rising tensions in the Korean peninsula, as well as by the recurrence of acts of terrorism and of violent extremism. These challenges to peace and stability threaten to reverse the development gains registered over the recent decades and to hinder our development efforts as we chart the way forward.

Therefore, it is our hope that the ongoing peace initiatives as well as the measures to curb the recruitment and finance of terrorist groups will result in opportunities to further promote peace and development, as well as to strengthen human rights and to build more inclusive societies. Only through constructive dialogue and peaceful means and solutions can we secure durable peace and stability in our world. To that end, we would like to emphasize the importance of strong democratic institutions at the national level, the impact of regional cooperation and the role of the United Nations.

Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.

As we gather in this great Hall, the world is once again facing the threat of the dangers posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which have become the most dangerous existential threat that humankind faces in the twenty-first century. As a country with a Constitution that values the principle of the universal disarmament of all States and negotiated solutions to international conflicts, as well as the peaceful use of nuclear energy, Mozambique notes with great concern the escalation of tension and the risk of nuclear confrontation that is unfolding on the Korean peninsula. The catastrophic impact of a nuclear conflict demands a more restrained approach based on dialogue, skilful diplomacy and the political will to de-escalate and to fully comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions. More than anything else, the resolutions signal our collective disapproval of the course of events in that part of the world.

The lack of progress in the decolonization of Western Sahara, the sole African country still to exercise the right to self-determination, continues to be a cause for grave concern to Mozambique. Regrettably, all the efforts deployed by the United Nations, the African Union and other actors to bring about an accepted settlement aiming to grant the people of Western Sahara their inalienable right to self-determination and independence has not yielded results. We would like to seize this opportunity to call upon the Security Council, the General Assembly and the international community to exercise their responsibility by implementing their own resolutions, particularly regarding the principle of self-determination and right of freedom, as well as to support the African Union and its Special Envoy to Western Sahara, Mr. Joaquim Chissano, former President of Mozambique.

The principle of self-determination and the right to freedom should also be a reality for the Palestinian people. To that end, it is imperative that the relevant Security Council resolutions be implemented. We believe that the solution relies on the two-State principle of Palestine and Israel coexisting side by side, in peace and security.

Mozambique has followed with great interest the efforts of Cuba and the United States of America to stabilize the diplomatic relations between these two neighbouring countries, an important step towards the normalization of bilateral relations and bringing to an end the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America

against Cuba. In that context, we note with concern the latest developments and appeal to the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo, for it hinders the socioeconomic development of Cuba and the Cuban people. Therefore, Mozambique once again associates itself with the overwhelming majority of countries in this Hall to demand the immediate termination of this unilateral coercive measure.

We live in a world confronted by challenges that demand global responses. The relevance of the United Nations, the lodestar of multilateralism, over the past 72 years of its existence has always rested in its ability to reform and reinvent itself to respond more suitably to the challenges of the continuously changing world that it serves. Therefore, Mozambique supports the Secretary-General's efforts to pursue reform of the United Nations system in order to make it fit for purpose, and commends his demonstrated desire to fully consult and seek consent of the United Nations membership at each stage of the process.

In addition to the ongoing reforms, we also need to urgently accelerate Security Council reform, another element that will contribute to reaffirming the role of the United Nations in the quest for sustainable solutions to the peace and security challenges facing humankind. The difficulties stemming from the lack of consensus among members to initiate text-based negotiations to complete the reform of the Security Council constrain our ability to open a new window of opportunity that would enhance the credibility of the organ by making it more representative of the current reality. The Security Council is one of the fundamental pillars of the success of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I would like to conclude by reiterating the unconditional commitment of the Government of Mozambique to continuing to engage, in partnership with the United Nations and fellow Member States, in the search of sustainable solutions to the problems that affect the humanity. History has shown us that humankind thrives best when we, the peoples, are able to share, collaborate, cooperate, engage in dialogue and care.

The General Assembly will always be the platform where we renew our commitment and rededicate ourselves to the noble ideals on which this great Organization was founded — to save succeeding

generations from the scourge of war and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. Let us all stay loyal to these lofty ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and work together to transform our world.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ismael Abraão Gaspar Martins, Chair of the Delegation of the Republic of Angola.

Mr. Martins (Angola): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Angola, allow me to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on having been elected to preside over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to assure him of Angola's full support in the fulfilment of his mission, so that he may successfully provide us with the leadership we need at this time.

I also congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the Assembly at its seventy-first session, on the capable manner in which he conducted the work of the previous session; and Mr. António Guterres on his appointment to the post of Secretary-General. Allow me to wish Mr. Guterres every success in his mandate and assure him of the full support and cooperation of Angola.

As has been reiterated several times in this forum, peace and security are fundamental premises for stability, sustainable development, democracy and the promotion of and respect for human rights. The theme chosen for this session — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — is timely and compels us to collectively reflect on the actions of the United Nations to solve the main problems affecting humankind.

We need an Organization capable of promoting international peace and security by acting swiftly to prevent potential conflict situations, improving the global strategy to combat international terrorism, and placing economic and social development issues at the centre of its action. In this context, we appreciate the relevance of the four axes defined in the agenda of this session, namely, the prevention and mediation of conflicts to achieve sustainable peace, the promotion of human rights, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

We reiterate Angola's support for the Secretary-General's proposals for reforms with a view to revitalizing and rationalizing the resources of the

Organization. The United Nations should act as the first instance in the promotion of peace diplomacy at the global level.

We also reiterate the need to reform the Security Council in order to have it reflect the reality of the contemporary world. Its current composition is outdated and needs to be urgently reformed. In line with the African position represented in the Ezulwini Consensus, Angola reiterates the need to increase the number of permanent members to ensure a fair geographical balance. It is unfair that the African continent, which accounts for almost 40 per cent of the States Members of the United Nations, is not represented among the permanent members in the main organ in charge of maintaining peace and security in the world.

Angola underlines the importance of multilateralism in solving global problems, in accordance with the logic of shared responsibility and benefits, in recognition of the legitimate interests of all and in concertation towards realistic solutions. Angola's attachment to multilateralism is strongly emphasized in its role in solving problems that threaten peace and security on the African continent, particularly in the Great Lakes region.

In the context of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Angola has been leading diplomatic efforts, with its regional and international partners, to find a lasting political solution capable of guaranteeing security, stability, economic and social development, and democracy for the countries and peoples of the region. This joint engagement has allowed for a substantial reduction of tensions in the region, with notable advances such as the continuation of the inter-Burundi dialogue, encouraging signs in the resolution of the political crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and positive developments in the peace process in the Central African Republic, which have made it possible to hold elections in the country leading to the normalization of its institutions.

Despite these advances, we still have a long way to go on the path towards fully stabilizing that part of our continent, and the parties involved carry the main responsibility for ending the violence, respecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the citizens of their respective countries, and building their national political institutions. In this context, they must demonstrate through action their commitment to and

engagement with peace agreements and other political platforms either negotiated directly or sponsored by regional institutions and the international community.

The international community's collective action under the auspices of the United Nations should also cover the fight against terrorism. In this fight, a significant part of our effort should be directed at combating the causes of terrorism and violent extremism, which reside, *inter alia*, in the social crises in and the institutional fragility of many States. The case of Libya is a blatant example of this reality.

The African continent has been at the forefront of the fight against terrorism, which has killed innocent civilians, caused extensive damage to property and destroyed the way of life of many of its countries. Angola fully supports the efforts of the African Union, with the assistance of its international partners, to confront the scourge of terrorism.

Two years ago, we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — an important instrument to guide the development strategies of our States. We hope that its implementation over the next 13 years will substantially reduce the major social deficiencies affecting developing nations in particular. The economic and financial difficulties affecting most countries have had a negative impact on the mobilization of financial resources for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, especially among the poorest, most vulnerable countries with limited internal resources. International efforts aimed at securing critical financial resources should be guided by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, adopted in 2015.

The Republic of Angola, which is now beginning a new cycle in its life as a nation, is strongly engaged in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, despite an adverse global economic environment. To that end, Angola has launched its national development plan, aimed at rehabilitating and modernizing economic and social infrastructure, promoting public and private investment, and enhancing training, qualification and the adequate management of human resources.

The world is moving towards consensus in recognizing the urgency of combating climate change. To this end, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is extremely important in the development of enabling tools for protecting the right to development and strengthening resilience in developing countries. Angola views the Agreement as a historic commitment

and an encouragement to contain global warming and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The urgent need for the world to advance the implementation of the Paris Agreement has been dramatically highlighted by the recent climate-related disasters in various parts of the world. Angola joins in solidarity with the victims in the Caribbean, Mexico, the United States and other parts of the world.

In order to address this and other challenges facing the international community, Angola will continue to be a safe and responsible partner of the United Nations and contribute to the implementation of its agenda in an engaged manner. We are increasingly able and fit to play a decisive role in restoring peace and security, particularly in Africa, as well as in furthering its economic development. To that end, Angola has remained stable, and the pacification of the country has definitely been achieved.

The Republic of Angola recently held its third general elections in peacetime, in a climate of tranquillity, respect for differences and great civility, demonstrating the stability prevailing in the country and that the gradual consolidation of democracy is a fact. The priorities of the new Government will focus on economic development with particular attention on combating poverty, reducing inequalities, combating unemployment, and improving governance insufficiencies and development indicators as a *sine qua non* for building a prosperous and democratic society.

Regrettably, peace is still not prevalent in many regions. Concerning Guinea-Bissau, a country linked to Angola by historical and brotherly ties, we remain confident and expectant regarding the resolution of the political impasse. In this regard, we strongly support the efforts of all the Guinean, regional and international political and social actors, including the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries.

The issue of Western Sahara continues to merit the due attention of the United Nations to ensure the effective implementation of the relevant Security Council and African Union resolutions. Angola encourages the main parties involved to continue the dialogue in order to resolve the dispute, which has lasted too long.

In the Middle East, we are concerned about the impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Angola argues that the solution lies in the acceptance and existence of two States, living side by side in peace and security.

The tension we are now witnessing in the Korean peninsula poses a very serious threat to international peace and security. Angola joins the voices advocating for a diplomatic solution and compliance with international non-proliferation instruments. The peoples of the region deserve to live in peace and not haunted by the spectre of a conflict whose effects would be devastating and unacceptable to the human conscience.

Angola promptly welcomed the steps taken to normalize relations between the Republic of Cuba and the United States of America, which will benefit the two peoples. The complete lifting of the economic, commercial and financial embargo would contribute significantly to easing tensions between the two countries and would eliminate one of the last remnants of the Cold War. This would also bring about a more stable and peaceful environment for development in the Latin American region. This unilateral measure — the embargo — limits the Cuban people's enjoyment of development, and its extraterritorial effects violate the principles and norms of international law.

The promotion and protection of human rights have always been at the forefront of Angola's foreign priorities, as evidenced by the fact that it is a party to the main international human rights instruments and maintains an exemplary cooperation and ongoing dialogue with United Nations human rights mechanisms. It is in this context that Angola is a candidate for a seat on the Human Rights Council in the elections that will take place in October 2017. We look forward to participating actively in and contributing to the protection of human rights in the regions and countries most affected by violations of these rights. In this regard, we would highly appreciate the support of the members of the Assembly for our candidacy.

I would like to conclude by urging Member States to renew their confidence in the United Nations and strengthen international dialogue as a key element of a culture of peace, respect for differences among peoples, conflict prevention and the foundations of progress and development, to which all the peoples of the world have the right and are entitled.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Craig John Hawke, Chair of the Delegation of New Zealand.

Mr. Hawke (New Zealand): There is no greater demonstration of the ability of the United Nations to bring the world together than the opening of the General Assembly. The breadth of issues which are discussed in this Hall is immense. Often there are as many points of view as there are Member States, but ultimately we as an Organization share the common goal of making the world more peaceful and improving the lives of all of our peoples.

New Zealand is approximately 1,000 kilometres removed from its nearest neighbour in the Pacific, but our international connections are an intrinsic part of our identity and the foundation of our prosperity. We are an outward-looking nation that relies on global stability for our trade and the safety of our people. As a founding Member of the United Nations, New Zealand has always supported the leading role of the United Nations in a multilateral system, which fosters positive international relations.

Given the significant ongoing challenges to peace and security, the role of the United Nations in preventing and resolving conflict is as relevant now as ever. Among those challenges, North Korea presents some of the most pressing threats to international security in our time. The North Korean regime has consistently disregarded Security Council resolutions, the wishes of the international community and the well-being of its own people. In this past month alone, it has conducted its sixth nuclear test, launched a ballistic missile over Japan and carried out other ballistic-missile tests. Those provocative actions have directly undermined the nuclear non-proliferation regime, and that has serious wider implications.

As we saw during our recent term on the Security Council, the Council works most effectively when it acts as one. New Zealand supports the strong, unified responses by the Security Council, and we stand ready to work with Member States on measures that will fully reflect the consequences of North Korea's actions. We hope to see tensions defused and a path to dialogue developed. The goal of denuclearization requires eventual engagement with Pyongyang, but any dialogue must be meaningful and constructive, and must address the issues that most concern the international community. Until then, we join the rest

of the international community in calling on North Korea to undertake immediate actions to de-escalate tensions, improve its humanitarian situation and abide by its international obligations.

The risks associated with nuclear weapons and nuclear proliferation have been a key factor in New Zealand's long-standing commitment to international nuclear disarmament. Last week, we were pleased to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Treaty represents an important step towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

New Zealand is committed to playing its part to address global threats to peace and security. We have a history of contributing to efforts to prevent and resolve conflict, including through the United Nations. On the Security Council, New Zealand made determined efforts to improve the humanitarian situation in Syria. Alongside Spain, Jordan and Egypt, we managed to renew and improve cross-border access arrangements. We consistently raised concerns about the Council's failure to bring about a political solution. Unspeakable crimes continue to be committed against the civilian population, and humanitarian access remains fraught. Only a sustainable peace based on an inclusive long-term political settlement can bring that needless conflict to an end.

In Iraq, New Zealand's defence force personnel are working to strengthen the capacity of Iraqi forces in their battle against Da'esh. We welcome the liberation of Mosul, Tal Afar and Nineveh province. That was an admirable achievement, and we acknowledge the sacrifice and commitment of the Iraqi security forces and Government. We note that the influence of Da'esh is not limited to Iraq and Syria, and that the defeat of Da'esh there will not spell the end of that group. New Zealand is focused on working with others in our near region — the Asia-Pacific — to ensure that groups like Da'esh do not inflict suffering in the way they have elsewhere.

In addition to security-based efforts, preventing and countering violent extremism in the first place is vital, and we are pleased to support international efforts in that regard. New Zealand has been contributing to Afghanistan's stability since 2001. We remain a committed partner of Afghanistan including through the NATO Resolute Support Mission. Ongoing support for Afghanistan from the international community is critical, given the scale and complexity of the challenges

ahead, but history has demonstrated in Afghanistan that no amount of international support can by itself bring about lasting peace and security. Afghanistan's future lies in the hands of its Government and people. We continue to call on the National Unity Government to prioritize the interests of the Afghan people above all else.

The United Nations is unique in its ability to convene the world so as to tackle problems that require collective action. The speed with which parties ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change has demonstrated the strength of commitment to take meaningful action on climate change. New Zealand is among the many countries committed to the Paris Agreement. Progressing the Paris work programme is essential so as to deliver a framework that will ensure that the Agreement is robust, effective and credible, and that collective ambition will increase over time.

The Pacific is at the forefront of vulnerability to the effects of climate change. We are therefore pleased to support Fiji's presidency of this year's Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It is a rare opportunity for the region to showcase its leadership in that area. We are an island nation within a vast Pacific Ocean. Our exclusive economic zone is 15 times larger than our land area. The sustainable management of our sea and our islands are of critical importance environmentally, economically and culturally.

Small island developing States face unique challenges and vulnerabilities. They are also great-ocean States and stewards of considerable ocean resources. New Zealand wants to assist those States in the sustainable management of oceans to ensure that our oceans are healthy and productive. We are making substantial investments to improve sustainable fisheries management in the Pacific and to reduce illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

We are also propelling a major increase in renewable energy generation in our region and further afield. New Zealand has taken a lead role in advocating internationally for the reform of fossil-fuel subsidies, which lead to wasteful consumption, put renewable energy at a disadvantage and depress investment in energy efficiency. We are exploiting alternative sources of development financing, including working with the private sector, tapping into the diaspora as a source of skills and investment, maximizing the

value of remittances and increasing temporary labour market access.

New Zealand is supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in a wide range of areas, both domestically and internationally, including through our development assistance. We will continue to play our part in meeting the high level of ambition set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Pacific is an important part of how we define ourselves internationally. A strong and effective regional architecture, with the Pacific Islands Forum as the central regional body, is a key to Pacific success. New Zealand was pleased with the outcomes of the recent Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meeting, which had a strong focus on fisheries and climate change issues. Pacific leaders also agreed on the importance of fully implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions on North Korea, including by de-registering any North Korean trading or fishing vessels currently flagged in Pacific States' shipping registries.

New Zealand places significant value on the international rules-based order. Widely recognized rules, buttressed by an effective United Nations, are the best guarantors of our security and our economic well-being, particularly for small States. Such guarantees are also the best means of ensuring decent treatment and decent conditions for the world's citizens, and thereby reducing conditions that can lead to unrest, conflict and misery. But we all recognize that the United Nations can do better, and to do so it must be more relevant, effective and fit for purpose. The Secretary-General's reform agenda provides an opportunity for us to make that a reality. Important work lies ahead for us to reform the development, peace and security pillars.

Another critical element of making the United Nations more effective is management reform, including strengthening and modernizing its recruitment and management processes to ensure that maximum benefit is derived from its people. New Zealand looks forward to working together with the Secretary-General and all Member States. It is our sincere hope that reform can achieve our collective goal of better reflecting the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations and, ultimately, ensuring that the United Nations delivers better outcomes for our generation and those to come.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Aksoltan Ataeva, Chair of the Delegation of Turkmenistan.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to convey greetings and wishes for peace and prosperity to the peoples of the member States represented here from the President of Turkmenistan, His Excellency Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

I congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his important election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and I wish him success in his forthcoming work. I would also like to commend Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the Assembly at its seventy-first session, for his active and effective activities in that position.

Guaranteeing international peace and security and protecting the legal and institutional foundations that are at the basis of the modern world order are the main task of the countries of the United Nations and of the largest international organizations, and that requires of them closer and more coordinated cooperation. The degree of effectiveness of such cooperation will in its turn largely determine the success of solutions to other global problems, including the environment, energy and food-related issues, combating terrorism, drug trafficking and other challenges.

Today the effective and uncompromising struggle against terrorism has become the imperative of global development. It is clear that terrorism in all its forms is a deliberate challenge to the civilized world. In point of fact, terrorism as a phenomenon threatens to undermine the entire system of global security and its political and moral foundations. We strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and recognize that the prevention of terrorism is one of the most important components of ensuring national, regional and global security.

We welcome the important role of the United Nations in international efforts to combat terrorism. Supporting the efforts of the world community to create effective international counter-terrorism mechanisms. Turkmenistan therefore advocates the full implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We believe that such work should be carried out everywhere — at the global, regional and national levels.

In that connection, we welcome the establishment of United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, and we are ready to cooperate actively to further implement the Ashgabat Declaration, which was adopted at the outcome of the Central Asia-United Nations High-level

Dialogue on Implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia, held on 13 June 2017 in Turkmenistan.

Noting the role of preventive diplomacy in preventing conflicts, eliminating the causes that lead to conflict, establishing an atmosphere of trust among countries and creating positive conditions for effective cooperation among States on political, diplomatic, economic, social, environmental and other issues, Turkmenistan attaches particular importance to the activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia that are aimed at achieving those objectives in the Central Asian region.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Regional Centre. Turkmenistan, together with Central Asian countries, intends to submit to the First Committee a draft resolution on supporting preventive diplomacy mechanisms in addressing urgent problems with the intention of supporting peace and security.

The conditions in the world and new challenges and threats to humankind dictate the need to reform the United Nations and to review its working methods in order to strengthen its timeliness and its ability to react to those threats. We support reforms and also the efforts of the Secretary-General in that regard.

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is one of the key areas of our country's strategic cooperation with the United Nations. As a result of the comprehensive work that had been carried out jointly with the United Nations since October 2015 at the governmental level, the 17 Goals, 148 targets and 193 indicators of the SDGs were selected and adopted. To coordinate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals within the country, we have established a national mechanism for SDG implementation.

To organize training in the methodology related to issues of implementing the SDGs at the national, regional and international levels, we have opened a training and methodological centre within the Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Turkmenistan.

Turkmenistan, recognizing the importance of sport as a key factor for guaranteeing peace and sustainable development, again states its commitment to strengthening international sports cooperation.

Currently, in Ashgabat, the fifth Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games are being held, with the participation of national teams from 65 countries, including 19 countries of Oceania, which are participating for the first time.

Expressing our firm commitment to the provisions of resolution 70/1, of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", and recognizing the increasing role that sport plays in broadening the rights and opportunities of individuals and communities, Turkmenistan has initiated the participation of the refugee Olympic team in competitions, thereby reaffirming our country's commitment to the ideals of humanism, goodness, fairness and progress as anchored in the Charter of the United Nations.

We express our thanks to all countries for their support for the initiative of Turkmenistan and Brazil in that regard and for the adoption of the Joint Statement on Encouraging the Valuable Contribution of the Olympic Teams of Refugees to the Promotion of Peace and Human Rights at the thirty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council, on 15 September in Geneva. Pursuant to the Final Declaration of the International Sports Congress, entitled "Asian Games 2017: International Sport Cooperation for Peace and Development", published as an official document of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session (A/71/878, annex), Turkmenistan reaffirms its proposal to host, under the auspices of UNESCO, the seventh International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport.

Cooperation in the area of transport is a priority for our country in working with the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Turkmenistan will continue to actively support the implementation of the decisions of the international community, in particular resolutions 69/213, of 2014, and 70/197, of 2015, aimed at forming new international transport and transit corridors and updating existing ones. As an important step towards the implementation of those documents, the Government of Turkmenistan suggested holding the first United Nations Global Sustainable Transport Conference, which took place in Ashgabat in November 2016, and welcomed the participation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Recalling that the Ashgabat Statement on Commitments and Policy Recommendations was adopted at the end of the Conference, and with the aim of successfully implementing the 2030 Agenda

for Sustainable Development, Turkmenistan intends to submit to the Second Committee at the current session a draft resolution on strengthening the links between all modes of transport to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ensuring sustainable and fair access to energy resources is one of the main tasks on the global 2030 Agenda. This year our country will chair the international Energy Charter Conference. In line with the plans for our chairmanship, Turkmenistan has this year undertaken a range of measures to revitalize the process of developing new international legal mechanisms in the field of sustainable energy. In that context, we welcome the creation of an international expert group on energy security and sustainable energy and invite States to take active part in the work of the Energy Charter Conference, which will be held on 28 and 29 November in Ashgabat.

One of our main objectives is to participate actively in international efforts to deal with the most important issues of environmental protection, including the management of water resources. In the light of Turkmenistan's chairmanship of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), we propose holding a summit in 2018 in Turkmenistan, with the Heads of the Founder States of IFAS, which would include the participation of specialized international structures such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

We once again state our country's readiness to seek out new approaches and ways to overcome the challenges faced by humankind and reaffirm our firm commitment to cooperation with the United Nations, which was and remains a strategic priority and a practical foundation for all of our activities in the international arena.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Gustavo Meza-Cuadra, Chair of the Delegation of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly and congratulate the President on his election, and to express our willingness to contribute to the success of his term.

I wish first of all to emphasize Peru's commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, to international peace and security, to sustainable development and to human rights, and to the achievement of sustainable peace. For that, we need to strengthen multilateralism, dialogue and cooperation.

For Peru, the United Nations is essential for building a peaceful and sustainable future, facing global challenges such as climate change, terrorism or corruption, and strengthening international governance in order to obtain a more humane, open and inclusive globalization. Peru is preparing to become a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the biennium 2018-2019. Our vocation for peace and respect for international law, effective collective security and adherence to the peaceful settlement of disputes will be the guiding principles of our action.

We are a developing country that has suffered terrorism at first hand. We are a firm defender of human rights and a promoter of democracy and the rule of law. We will give special attention to consolidating sustainable peace and preventing conflicts and humanitarian crises.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the possible access of terrorist groups to them are real threats. That is why we have signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and we hope that all States possessing such weapons will adhere to that instrument.

We condemn the nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which today constitute the greatest threat to international peace and security. In the Security Council, we will support efforts to resume the Six-Party Talks in order to denuclearize the Korean peninsula.

Peru reaffirms its commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and its implementation. Our country is particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, which is seen in ocean warming, shrinking glaciers and the impact on the availability of water resources, the loss of biodiversity and other extreme phenomena. Climate change is a real threat that knows no borders. So far this year Peru has suffered from the rain and flooding of the coastal El Niño, and the Caribbean and the United States have suffered a series of devastating hurricanes. That is why we support the initiative of President Emmanuel

Macron of France to establish a Global Pact for the Environment.

Peru is also committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Accordingly, we presented our first voluntary national review in July, reporting on our progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda in line with our national priorities, circumstances and needs. Peru promotes, from a focus on rights, a social revolution aimed at eradicating poverty through quality public services. Ensuring access to water and sanitation is the first priority of our Government, which accounts for the participation of President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski in the High-level Panel on Water.

In line with the 2030 Agenda, we believe that corruption is also a global threat, one that erodes democratic governance and legal stability in our countries, diverts resources needed to finance development, generates disenchantment and mistrust in institutions and increases inequality. Aware of the need to confront that scourge together, Peru has proposed that democratic governance and the fight against corruption be the central themes of the Summit of the Americas to be held in Lima next April, with a view to adopting concrete measures to strengthen institutions and combat impunity.

The adoption of the standards and good practices of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development — which Peru aspires to join before 2021, the year of our bicentennial as an independent nation — will also contribute to strengthening our institutions and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Peruvians believe that democracy is indispensable for stability, peace, development and the defence and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Guided by that conviction, my country led the process that culminated in the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter in 2001.

In our region, democracy is an inalienable right, which is why Peru remains profoundly concerned with the rupture of the democratic order and humanitarian crisis happening in Venezuela, as well as by the infringements on and abuses of citizens that have been reported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The solution to the grave crisis in Venezuela must be peaceful and be negotiated by the Venezuelans themselves. Any attempt, internal or external, to resort to force violates the principles of the

Charter of the Organization and undermines genuine interest in defending democracy and respect for the rule of law, both domestically and internationally.

Along those lines, the Lima Group believes that the initiative of the Dominican Republic to bring together the Government and the opposition should be developed with good faith, rules, objectives, clear deadlines and guarantees of compliance, for which international accompaniment is essential.

To conclude, I wish to convey to the General Assembly that Peru will continue to work constructively to solve the problems we face and to bring about the future that our peoples long for and deserve.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jorge Arreaza, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Arreaza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We address the General Assembly at its seventy-second session in the name of the constitutional President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro Moros, and thus in the name of a sovereign, peace-loving people that believes in respect among nations and compliance with the purest and truest principles of international law — the Bolivarian people of Venezuela.

In the nineteenth century, the liberating army of Simón Bolívar left its country not to conquer or dominate, but rather to help brotherly peoples achieve their independence, so that later they could return home with the satisfaction of having been useful in the cause of liberty and equality. That is the spirit that characterizes our people and the actions of our revolutionary Government during such difficult times for humankind. That is why we will always uphold the Bolivarian diplomacy of peace.

Indeed, we are in the house of peace, the home of peaceful solutions and the land of international law and its principles. We are embraced and upheld by the Charter of the United Nations, a noble multilateral instrument to avoid war and injustices. Thus this rostrum should be respected, protected and cared for by nations. It is an all but sacred podium for the peoples that espouse peace and understanding.

However, this House, one of multilateralism and respect for the equality of peoples and States, has been defiled, disrespected and offended, time and time again, by arrogant Powers that seek to impose their unilateral

rules of the game — rules of war, suffering and pain. That was denounced in this very place, in a resounding voice and an incomparable manner, by Commander Hugo Chávez in 2006 (see A/61/PV.12). Everyone will recall his remark, that it smelled of sulphur in here. It continues to smell of sulphur. He tried to sound the alarm to generate the necessary restraint to confront the serious unilateral threats then threatening world peace.

Nevertheless, a week ago this Hall (see A/72/PV.3) — and the world, by way of the media — bore witness to yet another dangerous desecration of the principles and objectives of the United Nations. The emperor of the world, the President of the United States, Donald Trump, used this platform built for peace to announce wars, the total destruction of Member States and the implementation of unilateral and illegal coercive measures. He threatened and judged at will, as if he had absolute dictatorial powers over the sovereign States Members of our Organization. Paradoxically, in a display of brazenness and political hypocrisy, Donald Trump based his attacks against humankind on such values as peace and prosperity.

In our case, we recall that former President Barack Obama, who had a different style but the same goal, declared the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security of the United States. That was in an executive order on 9 May 2015. Today, we are obliged to declare before the world that our country was directly threatened by the President of the United States with the use of the most powerful military force that has ever existed in the history of humankind. That was on 11 August this year.

As a complement to such anachronism and an offence to our sovereignty and to the peace that has always characterized our Latin America and the Caribbean, the Trump Administration imposed illegal economic sanctions on our economy on 25 August, with a view to making our people suffer and forcing undemocratic changes to our system of government. In his statement last week Donald Trump appealed to the antiquated ideological rhetoric of the Cold War, to the best inquisitorial style of Richard Nixon and Senator Joseph McCarthy, to reiterate his threats against our country and our sister Republic of Cuba. Venezuela will always seek mutually respectful dialogue with the United States Government. However, as the free people that we are, we stand ready to defend our sovereignty, our independence and our democracy in any scenario and by any way.

Given such attitudes, the United Nations should establish effective mechanisms to neutralize warlike pretences and intentions to supplant multilateralism, which has cost us so much to consolidate, with the dictatorial unilateralism of those who intend, through the use of arms and economic blackmail, to impose destruction and a single way of thinking on our diverse and heterogeneous humankind. In that connection, last Tuesday the 120 members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries — two thirds of the General Assembly — unanimously adopted the Political Declaration of New York as a tool for denunciation, condemnation and joint action against coercive and unilateral measures that certain international actors impose in frank violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

In our statement on behalf of the presidency of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries at the plenary session of the Group of 77 and China last Thursday, we proposed that the New York Political Declaration be extended to that group of countries, which focuses on economic affairs, because the merciless and unilateral attacks against the economies of our peoples form an essential part of those illegal, unilateral and coercive measures. We must urgently seek multilateral responses to avoid the imposition of coercive measures whereby Governments that have imposed them illegally have a legal obligation to compensate the peoples who have suffered from their effects. In that regard, we condemn all unilateral actions against brotherly nations, such as Russia and Iran, in particular the extension of the criminal blockade against the brotherly Republic of Cuba, which has been in effect for more than five decades and, at this time, clearly reflects the new winds of United States unilateralism.

Venezuela firmly opposes the existence of nuclear weapons on our planet. Their possession exposes humankind to unimaginable and unjustifiable anguish and risks. We therefore signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons last Wednesday. We must make a supreme effort so that nuclear crises are de-escalated and vanish — hopefully along with their weapons — through dialogue and humanist reason.

In the area of human rights as well, Venezuela — which over the past several years has worked tirelessly to ensure the broadest form of social investment, redistributing with justice its national wealth among Venezuelan men and women so as to ensure their human and social rights — has been targeted and accused by

the United States Government. If there is any country that is not worthy of membership in the Human Rights Council, it is precisely the United States of America. It is the main violator of human rights, not only on its own territory, but throughout the world, including through unjustified wars, the bombing of civilian populations, clandestine imprisonment accompanied by various forms of torture, the imposition of unilateral and unlawful measures against economies in several countries, various kinds of economic pressure, and rash migration policies. It is the only country that has dared to use nuclear weapons against another people. It is a country that, violating the fundamental institutional framework of the United Nations, led the invasion of Iraq in 2003 on the grounds that it was searching for weapons of mass destruction that they never found, notwithstanding the more than 1 million deaths caused by that bloody military operation.

The United States is building a wall on its border with Mexico, and there is proposed legislation to impose a 7 per cent tax on immigrants' income to fund not their social security but the construction of that shameful wall.

Based on verifiable data from United Nations agencies and rapporteurs, we can note the following. The United States has not ratified 62 per cent of the principal treaties concerning human rights. In the United States, there is no independent institution for the defence and promotion of human rights. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions has condemned the lack of independence of the United States judiciary. Solitary confinement is widespread practice in this country. The number of homeless people has reached 3.5 million, including 1.5 million boys and girls. Some 28 per cent of those living in poverty have no health-care coverage. The maternal mortality rate has skyrocketed in recent years. Some 10,000 children are incarcerated in adult prisons, and children can be sentenced to life imprisonment. Of those who have been condemned to life, 70 per cent are African-American. The Special Rapporteur on the right to education has condemned the use of electric shocks and physical coercion in study centres.

The United States is one of the seven countries in the world that has not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In the United States, paid maternity leave is not mandatory. Allegations of police abuses, in

particular against the African-American community, are commonplace. More than 10 million African Americans continue to live in poverty, half of them live in situations of severe poverty. In a country in which slavery was supposed to have been abolished, the thirteenth amendment allows for slavery in the form of criminal conviction. One in three American indigenous women will undergo rape in her lifetime. We are discussing a country in which racial discrimination is not only unsurpassed, but one in which it is growing alongside the supremacist positions of the current Administration. Please excuse all the details, but there are things that we must know that the media hides.

Venezuela condemns terrorism in all its forms, whether perpetrated by the violent anarchist groups that today threaten world peace and stability or by States that assume the right to intervene throughout the world, gaining control of strategic natural resources through the use of military force with no compassion for civilians. It pains us to see how the Mediterranean Sea has become an immense cemetery, often before the blind eye and incompetence of States bearing partial responsibility for the crises generated in the migrants' countries of origin, owing to a combination of both forms of terrorism.

Incited and bloody wars like the prefabricated ones against Syria and Libya only leave behind desolation and division. Fortunately, with the support of their righteous international allies, the heroic Syrian Government and people are coming closer to a definitive victory against terrorist groups every day. Venezuela hopes for the success of the work of the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism in his role as head coordinator of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Venezuela hopes that that work will also condemn State terrorism.

Venezuela encourages the resumption of peace negotiations between Palestine and Israel, which must lead to a lasting and durable peace between the two States and recognizing as the borders of Palestine those that existed in 1967, in conformity with international law, as well as establishing East Jerusalem as its capital. We believe that the United Nations must assume a much greater proactive role in resolving that historic and unjust conflict.

We thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his sincere efforts in facilitating the implementation of the Geneva Agreement through the good-offices

mechanism so as reach a practical solution, satisfactory to the parties, in the case of the ongoing territorial dispute between ourselves and our brothers and neighbours in the cooperative Republic of Guyana.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will always be willing to help open the path of peace. We therefore commend the implementation of the peace agreements between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, to which both Commander Chávez and President Nicolás Maduro Moros devoted so much energy and effort. Likewise, we will continue to facilitate the talks between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional that are under way in the Republic of Ecuador.

Venezuela is not a drug-producing country, as international agencies have certified. We cooperate in a sovereign capacity with all neighbouring and non-neighbouring countries in countering drug trafficking. We express our concern about the increase in drug production in the neighbouring country of Colombia. However, we have always affirmed that consumer countries bear the primary responsibility, as they account for the incentives underlying both drug production and drug trafficking, and they must assume genuine control of the entry and distribution of drugs within their territories.

Since we have been working for many years with the United Nations Development Programme, Venezuela's path towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is simple, because our Plan de la Patria en Marcha and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development not only coincide, but they are also complementary instruments.

In terms of their financing, everyone knows that over the past 18 years, 76 per cent of Venezuela's revenue has been dedicated to social investment, and that will continue to increase. No economic attack or illegal sanction will prevent President Maduro from continuing and developing policies that ensure the social rights of our fellow citizens. Yes, we are concerned about the obvious lack of sources of funding for both our brotherly countries and for those that last year expressed their willingness to comply with the 2030 Agenda although they lack the funds required to do so. The United Nations must commit to guaranteeing that worthy funding for the comprehensive and sustainable development of all Member States.

It may be no coincidence that days before and during this seventy-second session of the General Assembly, the effects of the frequently warned of and feared climate change have manifested themselves through the devastation and death caused by consecutive hurricanes of magnitudes never previously seen. Those occurred not too far from New York. The unprecedented wrath of those natural phenomena has affected our brothers and sisters in several Caribbean countries.

The Prime Ministers of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Browne, and of Dominica, Roosevelt Skerrit, made two extraordinary statements to the General Assembly (see A/72/PV.14 and A/72/PV.19, respectively) in which they bravely and emotionally expressed the most absolute truths and alerted us to the need for concrete, joint and urgent action to avoid greater havoc being wreaked by those phenomena, which are undeniably caused by climate change. Roosevelt Skerrit said that those small countries are becoming the victims of a war that they did not choose, did not start and are not part of. It is the war of developed countries and the capitalist system against our Mother Nature. Today, with greater emphasis than ever before, we recall the motto of environmental and conservationist social movements: let us not change the climate; let us change the system.

Restoring physical infrastructure and using construction techniques that are resistant to the hardships of new natural phenomena cannot fall to the affected countries and people. It is also a shared and differentiated responsibility that must be borne principally by the countries that pollute the most and thereby contribute to climate change. In that context, and in the light of the consequences that we have witnessed, we find it extraordinary and hostile that the Government of the United States, the most polluting country, intends to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which, while not a panacea, is a collective step forward to mitigating the effects of climate change. How many hurricanes, typhoons, landslides, droughts and cases of subsidence; how many deaths, injured people and devastated countries are needed to ascertain that climate change, as stated by the experts of our very own United Nations, is a threat to the entire planet and that it is everyone's responsibility to reverse it?

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela offers its condolences to the Governments and families affected by the successive hurricanes in the Caribbean and the

United States, as well as the victims of the terrible earthquakes in our sister nation, Mexico. While we have sought to deal immediately and in solidarity with the emergencies in our region, President Nicolás Maduro will continue to provide the necessary support, not only that which is at our disposal, but everything we can help coordinate and direct in order to assist our friends and brothers in Latin America and the Caribbean.

As I said at the beginning of this statement, the Venezuelan people are subject to constant aggression by hegemonic Powers who seek to seize our natural resources — no more and no less than the world's largest oil reserve and one of the most important gas reserves, as well as our gold, diamond, coltan, iron, aluminium and thorium reserves and our biological diversity, water resources and fertile lands, among others. We have suffered multifaceted attacks against our economy, our currency and our production capacity. The attacks have included the induced generation of internal political violence by political factions that have tried to accede to power by undemocratic means since 2002.

This year, we suffered four months of political violence, once again aimed at overthrowing President Maduro. After the tension and pain of the unjustifiable deaths, the opposition violence was neutralized and appeased by the great democratic and popular demonstration on 30 July, in which more than 8 million Venezuelans came out to vote for peace and to elect a civil, sovereign and plenipotentiary National Constituent Assembly.

Those latest acts of violence by the Venezuelan extreme right took place on the very same 30 July in an effort to prevent people from going out to vote. Total political peace returned to the country from 31 July. We are witnesses to constituent peace. Our National Constituent Assembly, in coexistence with and respect for the rest of the constituted powers, has become not only a peacemaker and protector of the people, but also a quintessential instrument for national dialogue on and legitimate attention to the country's most urgent problems.

We have an active and popular democracy. We in Venezuela have organized 22 elections in 18 years. The revolution has triumphed in 20 of those elections. We have always developed social dialogue as a method of deepening our democracy. That is why we also welcome the fact that the Venezuelan political opposition has decided to redirect itself along the democratic

pathway and in line with the Constitution, through the participation of all its parties in the gubernatorial elections on 15 October.

We celebrate the fact that President Danilo Medina of the Dominican Republic, former President Rodríguez Zapatero of Spain, and former President Leonel Fernández of the Dominican Republic have adopted and defined the dialogue initiative that President Maduro announced just after the establishment of the National Constituent Assembly, and have summoned the parties to a process to which Nicaragua, Bolivia, Mexico and Chile have joined. We are grateful for the sincere support of those friendly countries and Governments, in order to promote the only possible solution — a peaceful, constitutional and sovereign solution that is built by all Venezuelans.

In these times of turmoil in the world, we want to see a United Nations that is truly united. Any reform process must take place with the participation and inclusion of all its Members. We need a United Nations that is truly effective in neutralizing violent and unilateral initiatives, as we stated moments ago, and that is able to work together with all Member States, without hegemonic bias. We need a United Nations system that identifies and warns of the true causes of the greatest problems humankind suffers today, and attends to them with no distractions or pressures that may be costly, while always respecting the principles of our founding Charter of the United Nations.

It is time for definitions. The historical struggle between healthy multilateralism and perverse unilateralism is at its peak. Let us make decisions that always bear in mind those who are most humble, the excluded, those who need us most, our Mother Nature. Let us be able to look into the eyes of our children and our grandchildren with the satisfaction of having halted the worst and guaranteed them a better future of peace, health and happiness. Let us build, through the United Nations, that which the Liberator asked of us in 1815 — a Government system that grants us the greatest possible amount of happiness, social security and political stability.

From this house of multilateralism, we say, may multilateralism live. From this place of international law, may international law live; from this home of peace, may world peace live. From the heart of Venezuela, rely on the Bolivarian Government of President Nicolás Maduro to close ranks on justice, humanism

and peace. As the Liberator wrote on 13 April 1823 to the then President of Peru, José de la Riva Agüero, "I am inclined to think that, when it is essential, love for the homeland will triumph". Likewise, we hold the unwavering and unrelenting certainty that under any circumstances, love of our sovereign, peaceful and Bolivarian Venezuela, love of our working people, love of our good people and love of the homeland, will triumph. Peace will triumph and prevail. We will always triumph.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Tore Hattrem, Chair of the Delegation of the Kingdom of Norway.

Mr. Hattrem (Norway): I would like to begin by congratulating Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session.

The world has experienced unprecedented progress during the past decades. Extreme poverty has been more than halved, people live longer, child mortality rates are falling, and more girls attend school than ever before. Global and political cooperation, trade and shared rules of the road have brought us to where we are today.

I would like to highlight four building blocks that are crucial for a sustainable future. The first is that our core interests are common to us all, and we can achieve more when we act together. The second is that there can be no security without development and no development without security. The first universal road map for development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is premised on that holistic perspective. The third is that our security and welfare depend on our ability to uphold international law. Good global and national governance and the rule of law are decisive for sustainable development. The fourth is that protectionism and isolationism will put our shared development into reverse. We need more trade and cooperation, not less. We cannot afford to shake the very foundations that our open, global economic order is based on. It is vital that we demonstrate our shared commitment to a rules-based, multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core. The WTO remains our best chance of creating a level playing field. We will all benefit from open, predictable and enforceable rules and commitments for all. It will be crucial to achieve a substantive outcome at the WTO's Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires in December. That will be the litmus test.

As nations, our core interests are shared. We all want peace, security and welfare for our citizens. We have only one planet, and every nation's and every citizen's security and welfare depend on our ability to protect our natural environment and climate. We cannot allow inaction and unsustainable practices to prevail. The good news is that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have given us a universal development agenda. The Sustainable Development Summit, which took place in this Hall two years ago, represented a pinnacle of global governance and a defining moment for our common future. At that Summit, world leaders decided to put sustainability first.

Preventing and addressing war, conflict and humanitarian crises are crucial to sustainability. Norway strongly supports Secretary-General Guterres's vision for the United Nations. Every tool and institution within the United Nations system must be realigned to improve our ability to prevent conflict and make and sustain peace. Respect for fundamental human rights is critical if we are to build resilient, prosperous and peaceful societies. Investing in human rights today will prevent conflicts tomorrow.

I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to the peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the then Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia. It came about as a result of the courage and hard work of the parties, supported by international partners and a United Security Council. Norway is proud to have contributed to the process as a guarantor. The point I want to make is that the Colombian success story is propelling sustainable development forward both within and outside the nation's borders. The Final Agreement between the parties also addresses issues of general global interest, such as fighting illicit drug trafficking and deforestation in former conflict areas. The Colombian process has been the most inclusive peace process in history. Ensuring inclusivity in conflict resolution is both the right and the smart thing to do, and experience shows that women's participation in peace processes tends to increase the chances of sustainable peace.

Stability in the Middle East and North Africa is another issue of common interest to the international community, and it will be crucial to achieve regional stability, improve States' capacity to govern and increase cooperation between States in the region. The Norwegian leadership of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee donor group for Palestine is an example

of how institutional and economic development can underpin efforts to resolve a conflict politically.

Development assistance should play a more catalytic role in our shared global campaign for sustainable development by building capacity for generating domestic revenue, strengthening the delivery of public services, stimulating trade and job-creating investments and enabling individuals to take responsibility for their future into their own hands. That is why investing in education, particularly for girls, is the most effective way of promoting sustainable development, and why we are working hard to promote education globally. Norway has doubled its aid to global education over the past four years.

Education creates stability and hope for children and young people in conflict areas. Preventing gaps in children's education is also important for post-conflict reconstruction and development. That is why Norway has significantly increased its contribution to education in emergencies, with 8 per cent of our humanitarian budget now dedicated to education. Norway has helped to initiate the Education Cannot Wait fund, whose purpose is to facilitate global funding to keep children in school during conflicts and crises. Schools must also be protected from attacks, which is why Norway has endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration and encourages others to do the same.

Further increases in both domestic and external financing will be needed if we are to attain SDG 4, on quality education for all. Last year, the Education Commission, initiated and supported by Norway, delivered a report with recommendations for increasing financing for education, including funding for the Global Partnership for Education, Education Cannot Wait and a new initiative, the International Finance Facility for Education. Norway has doubled its support for global education through the Global Partnership over the past four years, and we are committed to working with partners to ensure that the funding for it is successfully replenished.

The fight against terrorism is a core interest that we all share. Groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) cannot be allowed to challenge our free and open societies. Together we are making decisive progress against ISIL in Syria and Iraq, and we can now look forward to a time when ISIL will be defeated territorially. Norway is making significant contributions to the international coalition in every way

it can, and we are also providing humanitarian relief to those affected. We have disbursed \$500 million for the Syria crisis since 2016, which means that we are on track to fulfil the pledge we made at the London donor conference. We must now strengthen our efforts to secure sustainable peace in those areas, and the Security Council must step up and take responsibility. We should increase our efforts to alleviate other large-scale humanitarian crises, such as those in Yemen, South Sudan and the Lake Chad basin.

We also need a strong, unified Security Council to help us deal with the North Korean nuclear-weapon programme and ballistic-missile tests. A political solution will be crucial to ensuring the security of us all.

Our shared commitment to sustainable development includes the commitment to leaving no one behind. Norway's humanitarian assistance this year, which amounts to approximately \$650 million, supports that cause. Today 142 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, the highest number since the end of the Second World War. Many of the current humanitarian crises are conflict-related, and it is more important than ever to ensure the protection of civilians in such circumstances. We are very concerned about the lack of respect being shown for international humanitarian law. We underline the obligation of all the parties to a conflict to protect civilians and ensure safe, unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need. Norway is working actively to strengthen respect for international humanitarian law among parties to armed conflicts.

Putting sustainability first means acting together to save the oceans. We applaud the Secretary-General for appointing the first-ever Special Envoy for the Ocean. We congratulate Mr. Lajčák's predecessor as President of the General Assembly, Mr. Peter Thomson, on his appointment to that important job and wish him every success in galvanizing global efforts to protect the world's oceans. If we are to be able to harvest resources from the oceans in the future, we must ensure that they are clean and healthy. And it is important for small island developing States — also known as large-ocean States — to join forces to find good solutions that promote the health and sustainability of our oceans. It was against that backdrop that Norway hosted a meeting at the United Nations this week to explore the enormous range of opportunities that sustainable oceans can provide.

The President returned to the Chair.

In conclusion, the United Nations is the backbone of our global order, and we need a strong and healthy back to address and resolve the challenges the world is facing today. We know that we can do it together. The United Nations provided the leadership that united the countries of the world through the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which was an important step towards ensuring the sustainability of our planet. We were also able to come together in Addis Ababa in 2015 and agree on a framework for financing sustainable development, which will be crucial to our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. There are many shared challenges that still have to be solved, while at the same time we must safeguard all that we have already accomplished together. Those are the tasks that we have to tackle together in the General Assembly.

Norway has actively supported the United Nations since it was founded. Through seven decades and changing Norwegian Governments, we have worked tirelessly in and with the United Nations for our common interests. Norway is a candidate for membership in the Security Council for the period from 2021 to 2022, and we are counting on the support of the States Members of the United Nations for our candidature.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Maria Helena Lopes de Jesus Pires, Chair of the Delegation of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to the United Nations.

Ms. Pires (Timor-Leste) (*spoke in Portuguese: English text provided by the delegation*): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Francisco Guterres Lú-Olo, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

"At the outset, I would like to congratulate President Miroslav Lajčák on his election and wish him every success in carrying out his duties. I welcome the theme of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, 'Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet'. Conflict prevention and peacebuilding are without a doubt the tasks of our generation. I am confident that the President's capable leadership, together with that of Secretary-General António Guterres, will encourage and inspire our strong commitment and help us succeed in our common objective.

"It is a happy coincidence that I have been given the opportunity to address the General Assembly today, the same day on which, 18 years ago, the first members of the International Force in East Timor arrived in my country from Australia and New Zealand. The arrival on 20 September 1999 of that United Nations-mandated Force paved the way for our attainment of national independence, which a majority of the Timorese people voted for in a referendum on self-determination held under United Nations supervision. On behalf of the Timorese people, I reiterate my gratitude to the United Nations and to all the civilians and military officers under the flag of the United Nations who protect innocent people and save lives.

"Another happy coincidence is that there is another key player in the process that led to the self-determination of the Timorese people among us today — Secretary-General António Guterres. The determined efforts of Mr. Guterres, then Prime Minister of Portugal, guided by his values and ethical imperatives, were decisive in ensuring that today Timor-Leste is considered a joint success story for the Timorese people and the United Nations.

"The history of Timor-Leste is a vivid reminder that when the values of civilization, on which the very existence of the United Nations is founded, lead us and inspire our decisions on the international scene, the United Nations and international law become powerful and decisive forces for settling conflicts and restoring peace. This year Timor-Leste is celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the restoration of its independence, on 20 May 2002. Over the past 15 years, the partnerships we have established with the United Nations and its specialized agencies and development partners have produced important and inspiring results. We have achieved what few thought possible.

"The mortality rates of children under the age of 5 have fallen by half. According to the World Health Organization, Timor-Leste succeeded in reducing malaria rates from 220 out of 1,000 cases in 2006 to one in 1,000 in 2012. In 2002 there were 19 doctors in Timor-Leste; today we have nearly 1,000, trained thanks to the cooperation and solidarity of the people and the Government of Cuba. We have doctors in every village and several new hospitals. My country has been declared

leprosy-free by the World Health Organization for the first time in centuries. In 2002, life expectancy at birth was 60 years; today it has reached 68.5.

"We consider education, like health care, a key priority. Our primary-education enrolment rates stand at nearly 100 per cent of school-age children and youth. We have recently introduced a new curriculum at the primary-school level and we given special priority in the past few years to building new schools and improving school equipment, with the primary objective of these and many other measures being improving the quality of public schools.

"The progress we have made is reflected in the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index, in which our score during the past six years has averaged 0.610. In 2002, it was 0.375.

"The State of Timor-Leste has also undertaken initiatives to increase women's participation in and contribution to the process of social and economic development, including by enacting legal measures against discrimination. Many East Timorese women occupy important positions in Government, the justice system, other public institutions and civil society. A third of the members of Timor-Leste's national Parliament are women. However, ensuring that women are protected against exploitation and violence, as well as giving full recognition to their role in society, still requires the Government's attention.

"The Timorese people's most important achievement during the past 15 years has been in building peace and reconciliation at both the national and international levels. Peace and reconciliation have been made possible thanks to the vision of our national leaders and the courage of Timorese society as a whole to reject vengeance and genuinely adhere to that vision.

"We have established solid relations of friendship and close cooperation with Indonesia and Australia. We are working to further strengthen our relations with our neighbours in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to which we have submitted our application for membership. Strengthening Timor-Leste's regional integration is a key priority of our foreign policy.

"In Timor-Leste, now that peace and stability have been achieved, we are putting our efforts into creating better conditions for economic and social development. In particular, we have improved development conditions for small and medium-sized enterprises and the private sector, and we are promoting the diversification of the non-oil economy. This year we also strengthened democracy through our most recent presidential and legislative elections, which were organized entirely by the Timorese people.

"We believe that a key condition for the development of the country is ensuring stable and solid institutions that provide quality public services. This is why my country supported the inclusion in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. We believe that there can be no development without peace, and the importance of peace for development is a priority for us that has been reflected in Timor-Leste's commitment to establishing the g7+ since 2009. The g7+ brings together a couple of dozen States that are emerging from conflict or in a situation of fragility. The Group's action has had tangible, positive results in relationships with development partners and in bilateral and multilateral cooperation. We have seen these mutual advantages in the cooperation that has resulted among fragile States in relevant areas such as peace and reconciliation, the management of natural resources and the stewardship of public finances. Many of the member States of the g7+ have also hosted or are hosting United Nations peacekeeping missions, putting them in the privileged position of being able to share their valuable experience with regard to areas of peacekeeping that have been successful and those that need improvement.

"Our national experience has taught us to value multilateralism as an important instrument for responding to challenges within the international system, but that is not the only reason we value it. Another is the 2030 Agenda, which embodies multilateralism's potential for improving the planet and the well-being of its peoples. The 2030 Agenda has benefited from the overall experience of the process of the Millennium Development Goals, and its success will benefit the many millions who have been deprived of basic human

rights through poverty. Only through dialogue, negotiation, multilateral cooperation and respect for democracy can we meet the ambitious goals we have established for 2030.

"Today the international community is facing unprecedented challenge that require multilateral cooperation and a global response. Climate change is already having a growing impact on the development conditions for society and on the future of the planet. The effect on food security, among other things, is central to our concerns and has been the target of several Government measures, including within the scope of multilateral cooperation in the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, which we recently had the honour of presiding over. For small island developing States, the effects of climate change represent an existential issue that requires attention and effort from us all.

"International cooperation in the fight against transnational crime at all levels is a top priority for Timor-Leste. We, the international community, have an inalienable duty to work to realize the values of civilization enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and its conventions. Timor-Leste is a participant in a number of important multilateral processes for regional and international stability and security, and we will continue to expand and deepen that participation.

"The world is facing threats that were unimaginable when the United Nations was first established. The Organization must be capable of responding to the new challenges facing humankind. In that context, I would like to express Timor-Leste's full support for the ongoing reform process led by the Secretary-General, particularly with regard to the United Nations development system and its management of areas such as peacekeeping, security, gender parity and strategies against sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as his recent establishment of a High-level Advisory Board on Mediation and the Office of Counter-Terrorism

"The world is currently confronting two huge threats to international peace, the hotbeds of war in the Middle East and the nuclearization of the Korean peninsula and escalating tensions there. My country urges all the parties involved, in both regions, to show the greatest possible restraint in

order to avoid any steps that could aggravate the situation. Timor-Leste calls on all the parties to fully respect the relevant international conventions and Security Council resolutions. In particular, I call for dialogue and negotiation to help defuse the tensions and promote a peaceful settlement of the conflict on the Korean peninsula. Timor-Leste supports non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament and is in the process of signing and ratifying the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which it expects to conclude in the near future.

"My country welcomes the prospect of the holding of an intergovernmental conference on migration next year and considers it urgent to improve the coordination of the international community and the quality of the shelter for these massive movements of migrants and refugees. We must also tackle the root of the problem by increasing development opportunities in depressed regions and reducing the drivers of migration flows.

"Ensuring that the people of Western Sahara can finally exercise their right to self-determination continues to be postponed. For 26 years, the Sahrawi have been peacefully waiting for the parties to comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions. I call for dialogue between the Kingdom of Morocco, the legitimate representatives of the Sahrawi people and the United Nations aimed at arriving at a solution as soon as possible that can ensure the holding of a referendum on the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. I also call for the lifting of the embargo on the Republic of Cuba, an anachronistic situation that the international community has broadly rejected.

"I am very pleased to inform the General Assembly that Timor-Leste and Australia have made important and decisive progress in the talks on the demarcation of our shared maritime border. Timor-Leste initiated the settlement process required under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in April of last year. This mechanism, initiated for the first time in history, has enabled both countries to recently agree in principle on the central elements of the delimitation of the maritime borders of the Timor Sea. It has reaffirmed our faith in the ability of the international legal system, and in particular the United Nations, to support all States. We want to point out that thanks to the

United Nations and its procedures, it will now be possible for us to take one of our final steps towards achieving full sovereignty. We also hope that in these times of global complexity and uncertainty, our success in that process will set a small but positive example for the international community.

"In conclusion, I would like to emphasize Timor-Leste's commitment to the multilateral system. Timor-Leste will continue to cooperate closely and at every level with efforts to maintain regional and international security and stability. Our people greatly appreciate the support of the international community."

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. María Rubiales de Chamorro, Chair of the Delegation of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, please accept warm greetings from our President, Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra, our Vice-President, Rosario Murillo, and the people of Nicaragua, who wish you success in the great responsibility that you have taken on.

Many of the issues on the agenda during this session are of vital importance to the survival of our peoples. This year we have witnessed a world in upheaval, driven by multiple crises, including violations of international law and the sovereignty of our peoples, wars and threats of the use of force, and increased poverty and inequality. However, before I go into them, I would like to share my President's reflections summarizing the political will and course of action that must guide us if we are to achieve a better and more peaceful world.

"We must uphold the commitment to continuing to fight for peace, which is the global priority of all of our peoples, and to ensuring that the conflicts that arise in various parts of the world can be overcome through dialogue and negotiation. Above all, we must ensure that we are free from the use or the threat of the use of force, which is what our peoples desire the most from the peoples of the great Powers towards countries with small populations — countries that may be small in development but that are great in their values and history."

That should be the permanent commitment of the United Nations.

On behalf of the people and the Government of Nicaragua, I would like to express our solidarity with all the brothers and sisters of the Greater Caribbean — Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Cuba, Dominica, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and all the other islands affected by the recent devastating meteorological events that are becoming more intense and more frequent every day — and with our brothers and sisters the people and the Government of Mexico, for the two catastrophic earthquakes that occurred there. Our condolences and prayers go to all of the families who have lost loved ones and to the people and the Government of the United States for the hurricanes that have caused major damage in the states of Texas and Florida.

Let us focus on the importance of eradicating poverty. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents one of the most important achievements in the history of our Organization. It is a framework for the struggle for a just world order, so that together, in peace, solidarity and complementarity, we can make progress on eradicating poverty. It is deplorable that so much poverty still persists and that inequalities are now more marked than ever. But this development agenda will mean nothing to our peoples if we, the peoples of the world, do not display the political will, commitment and solidarity we need to promote human development with social justice and environmental policies that protect the planet in harmony with nature and ensure the survival of the human species and the life and rights of Mother Earth.

Seventy-two years on, our Organization is still unable to fully comply with the objectives set out in the Charter of the United Nations. We need fundamental reform urgently if we are to tackle that unfortunate situation. To achieve that, we must promote the crucial changes that will enable the Organization to serve the interests of humankind. We would like to point out that, during his presidency of the General Assembly in 2008, the late Father Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, whom we rightly call Nicaragua's Chancellor of Dignity — may he rest in peace — worked on and fought until the very end for that fundamental reform, laying the groundwork for discussing these changes. In that regard, it will be vital to reform the Security Council in order to ensure that its composition and function reflect the geopolitical and economic realities of the international community of the twenty-first century. Negotiations on the issue must enter a more dynamic phase as soon as possible,

and a negotiating text must be prepared with the goal of reaching the necessary agreements and proceeding with these reforms during the Assembly's seventy-second session.

We urgently need ambitious action to combat climate change. We note with great concern the unprecedented temperatures that are being registered all over the world and the lack of interest in reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. The developed countries must take the lead, change their unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and above all meet their financial commitments and complete their technology transfers. The Government and the people of Nicaragua will continue to advocate for a commitment to climate justice, as well as for an essential compensation policy that can be translated into direct and unconditional assistance.

We have welcomed the re-establishment of relations between Cuba and the United States of America, but it is upsetting that we are still seeing not only the restoration of measures aimed at maintaining the cruel, inhuman and criminal economic, financial and commercial embargo on Cuba but also threats to its sovereignty. From this rostrum, we join the other voices around the world saying no to the blockade of the heroic people of Cuba, of Fidel, Raúl, and Martí.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its Bolivarian revolution continue to contend with foreign harassment, interference and aggression. We condemn the threats of the use of force or military options made by the President of the United States against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, a threat that, as has been expressed by Nicaragua's President,

"has no place. The cry in Latin America and the Caribbean is unanimous — nobody wants military intervention from the United States. No one is asking the United States to come and intervene militarily in any Latin American or Caribbean country."

We proclaim our unconditional solidarity with the peoples of Bolívar and Chávez, and with the Government led by its constitutional President Nicolás Maduro and his people in their sovereign decision to democratically elect a Constituent National Assembly. Dialogue and negotiation are the only way forward for peace and reconciliation for the great Venezuelan family.

We wish our brothers in Colombia every success in implementing their peace accord. Our President

has said that Colombia is proving that there can be no military solution to such conflicts, and that after more than 50 years of war, in the end it was negotiations that prevailed. We congratulate Colombia.

We salute and will always stand in solidarity with the struggles of the peoples under occupation of the Latin American and Caribbean country of Puerto Rico; of Western Sahara, under the leadership of the Frente Polisario; and of the Argentine Republic in its legitimate sovereign rights over its Malvinas Islands. Nicaragua reiterates its commitment to the establishment of two States of Israel and Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the 1967 borders, with both peoples and Governments living in peace and harmony.

We reiterate our total solidarity with the Government and People of Syria in their fight against international terrorism and defence of their sovereignty and territorial integrity. We emphasize the need for a political and negotiated solution between Syrians and an end to foreign intervention, including financing, military training and supplying arms to terrorist groups, so that there may finally be peace. We are very concerned about the increase in terrorist attacks on our brother peoples and condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Nicaragua supports general and complete disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Yesterday we signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Verbal confrontations and threats of the use of nuclear weapons are unacceptable. We must work to advance commitments to eliminating nuclear arsenals around the world until they are gone forever, and to use the enormous resources expended on them to eradicate poverty. The situation on the Korean peninsula is of great concern. Nuclear tests contribute nothing to peace and should be condemned. We call for a political and peaceful solution to this dangerous military scenario through dialogue and negotiation, thereby ending the nuclearization of that region and achieving reunification and peace on the Korean peninsula.

If we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we must repeal unilateral coercive measures that violate international law and hinder our countries' development plans. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted on the basis of the principle of universality. It is therefore vital to ensure that no one is left behind, and that includes the 23 million

Taiwanese who are entitled to participate in the implementation of this global agenda. Taiwan is willing and able to participate in and contribute to the wide range of substantive United Nations programmes aimed at improving the well-being of humankind.

We in Central America are strengthening our integration in every area and working with our brothers and sisters to combat the scourges of terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime, as well as to transform the Gulf of Fonseca into a zone of peace and development. Our Government continues to work for the restoration of the political, economic, social and cultural rights of all Nicaraguans, with historic and significant results in the areas of equity, gender, investment, development and security. Nicaragua has been recognized by the World Economic Forum as having one of the best records on gender equity in Latin America and indeed the world. Civil and human security is one of our main strengths. That security is fundamental to social, political and economic stability, promoting a better quality of life, tranquillity, justice, peaceful coexistence and the comprehensive development of families.

In that regard, Nicaragua has developed a series of specific policies and programmes for combating the scourges of our time, such as terrorism, crime, drug trafficking, trafficking of arms and human trafficking, with very positive results. Working with communities has led to a successful collaboration that makes Nicaragua one of the safest countries in the region and one of the least vulnerable to organized crime. We have succeeded in that by consolidating a serious, constructive and transparent alliance between the Government, workers and the private sector, based on the model for alliance, dialogue and consensus that we have implemented while also relying on valuable international assistance, for which we are grateful.

My country has been working extremely hard to make progress in the fight against poverty. We therefore condemn the initiative of a group of United States congressmen who are attempting to damage the economy of Nicaraguan families through a bill known as the Nicaraguan Investment Conditionality Act (NICA), currently in the United States Senate, aimed at blocking Nicaragua's access to international organizations' programme funds for combating poverty. We want to remind the members of the United States Congress that there is a judgment outstanding by the International Court of Justice, in The Hague, ordering the United

States to compensate the people of Nicaragua for damages incurred from the loss of life and materials caused by acts of terrorism committed by President Reagan's Administration despite congressional opposition, including using drug traffickers to launder money in order to finance a war against Nicaragua while circumventing congressional bans. Nicaragua hopes that Congress will comply faithfully with the verdict of the International Court of Justice, which has ordered that Nicaragua be compensated and that bills such as the NICA Act, promoted by people bent on harming Nicaraguan families, be rejected.

In conclusion, I would once again like to quote my President:

"Here before the General Assembly, Nicaragua vows to consistently advocate for peace, stability and security in every part of our planet, in every forum, through every mechanism and with every nation with which we have relations."

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I would like to remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first statement and five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Hau Do Suan (Myanmar): My delegation has asked for the floor to exercise its right of reply to the irresponsible remarks made by some delegations about my country in the past few days during the course of the general debate. It is deeply regrettable that unsubstantiated allegations have been repeated in this Hall that liken the situation in Rakhine state to ethnic cleansing. Nothing is further from the truth. Terms such as "atrocities", "ethnic cleansing", and "genocide" should not be used lightly and only when there is solid evidence. Atrocities, ethnic cleansing and genocide are very serious charges that require legal review and judicial determination. They should not be bandied about or used loosely. Myanmar objects in the strongest terms to the use by delegations of words such as "atrocities" and "ethnic cleansing" in reference to the situation in Myanmar. I would like to urge them and the international community as a whole to see the situation in northern Rakhine objectively and in an unbiased manner.

Let me be clear. There is no ethnic cleansing. There is no genocide. The leaders of Myanmar, who have long been striving for freedom and human rights, will not espouse such policies. We will do everything we can to prevent ethnic cleansing and genocide. The issue of Rakhine state is extremely complex. I will not dwell on the details, since our Vice-President already addressed the issue at length on 20 September (see A/72/PV.10).

It is the responsibility of every Government to fight terrorism and protect innocent civilians. We condemn all human rights violations and violent acts. As members are aware, on 25 August, within hours of the release of the report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, a series of coordinated attacks were carried out on 30 police outposts in northern Rakhine state. The so-called Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) has claimed responsibility for the attacks, and the Government of Myanmar subsequently declared ARSA to be a terrorist group. The highest Islamic organization in Myanmar, the All Myanmar Islamic Religious Organization, has also issued a statement condemning the terrorist attacks in Rakhine state. The vicious attacks have resulted in the loss of life and property and the displacement of peoples. Those who have had to abandon their hearths and homes are many — not just Muslim and Rakhine, but also small minority groups such as Daingnet, Mro, Thet, Mramagyi and Hindus. Most of the world has been unaware of the existence and plight of those small groups.

In the affected area of northern Rakhine, the Muslim community is not a minority, as is widely reported. They are in fact a majority, because their population has increased, and they now constitute 95 per cent of the total population in the area. The evil nature of the ARSA terrorist group was revealed once again yesterday, when the authorities discovered a mass grave of 28 Hindu villagers, including women and children, cruelly and brutally killed by the ARSA. Today another 17 bodies have been unearthed, those of some of the 93 Hindu villagers who have been reported missing since the attacks on 25 August. When it comes to terrorism, there can be no choices. The world cannot condone terrorism in any form or manifestation for any reason. We must stand together to eliminate it.

The Assembly may be asking, what of the exodus? There are several reasons for it. Prominent among them is the fear factor. Following the terrorist attacks and the security operation, most women and children were forced to flee, while the men were conscripted

into ARSA to fight the security forces. Many villages were intimidated into fleeing to Bangladesh so as to attract international attention. The scorched-earth policy of the terrorists is another factor. The seeds of terror were meticulously sown long before the attack. Villagers considered to be collaborating with the Government were brutally murdered. The terrorists planted improvised explosive devices everywhere, blew up bridges and committed arson. The Government is striving to restore normalcy, and the situation has improved. Since 5 September, there have been no armed clashes.

At present, humanitarian assistance is our top priority. We are committed to ensuring that all in need receive aid, without discrimination. We have already dedicated significant national funds and resources to humanitarian relief operations. Relief aid and assistance has been being provided immediately after the attacks. Now more effective measures are being put in place by the Government. A new Government-led mechanism, established in cooperation with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, has begun to provide humanitarian assistance to all displaced inhabitants. We are also discussing with our fellow member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) the possibility of utilizing the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance Centre to provide much-needed humanitarian assistance to all the affected communities in Rakhine state.

The Government of Myanmar is fully committed to solving the issue of Rakhine state. The recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State have given us a clear road map, and the recently formed ministerial-level Implementation Committee has already begun its work. On 22 September, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with the Committee and set out the immediate tasks.

I would like to reiterate that refugees who have fled to Bangladesh will be repatriated to Myanmar, based on the experience of 1993. We will be setting up a working group for verification as quickly as possible in order to conduct a systematic verification process. The Government is organizing a visit on 28 September for the diplomatic corps to the affected areas in northern Rakhine state so that they will have the opportunity to witness first-hand the situation on the ground. We are also reaching out to the Bangladesh side to find a way to solve the problem of refugees.

Mr. Ghaniei (Islamic Republic of Iran): We have requested the floor in exercise of the right of reply in reaction to some statements, including the baseless claims made by representatives of the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain during the current general debate. The representative of the United Arab Emirates, in his address on Friday, 22 September (see A/72/PV.18), made several unfounded allegations against my country.

It is regrettable to see that, year after year, representatives of that country resort to the same fabrications against my country. If they think that by repeating a lie often enough it becomes the truth, then they are wholly mistaken, as in reality that proposition is itself a lie. From backing the invasion imposed by Saddam Hussein against my country, to participation in the coalition of death in Yemen and spreading takfiri extremism, the officials of the United Arab Emirates, along with Saudi Arabia, have long opted for vicious interventionist policies that have spread instability and chaos in the region and inflicted misery upon its people. As their policies continue to bring about death and destruction in our region, from Syria to Yemen, it is farcical that Saudi Arabian and United Arab Emirates representatives have the audacity to accuse Iran of supporting terrorism and interfering in other countries' internal affairs.

The three islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb in the Persian Gulf have been and continue to be an inseparable and integral part of Iranian territory, and Iran reiterates its sovereignty over those islands. Therefore, any claim to the contrary is categorically rejected. Meanwhile, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in line with its policy of friendship and good-neighbourliness towards all neighbouring countries, stands ready to discuss any possible misunderstandings with its neighbours. However, it is obvious that the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran over said islands are not negotiable.

The representative of the United Arab Emirates should also be reminded that the term "Persian Gulf" has been the correct appellation for the body of water situated between the Arabian peninsula and the Iranian plateau since 500 B.C., and will remain so forever.

Allow me to also briefly refer to the statement made on Saturday, 23 September (see A/72/PV.20) by the representative of the regime of Bahrain, which

contained many of the aforementioned baseless allegations, which we have vehemently rejected. Those illusory accusations amount to desperate efforts to cover up the violation by the oppressive regime of Bahrain of the basic human rights of the majority of the Bahraini people. By leveling those allegations, the ruling family seeks to justify its tyranny, oppression and blatant trampling of the rights of the Bahraini people, who are deprived of any meaningful participation in the running of the country.

Let me conclude by once again reiterating our call for dialogue with a view to dispelling misunderstandings and restoring friendly relations among all countries neighbouring the Persian Gulf region.

Ms. Nuran (Indonesia): The delegation of Indonesia is compelled to exercise our right of reply to respond to the statements made by the representatives of Vanuatu and Solomon Islands and echoed by the representatives of Tuvalu and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, concerning Papua and West Papua.

This is one time too many that a hoax and false allegations are being circulated by individuals who are economically motivated by the separatist agenda of Papua and their supporters. Time and time again, the same fabricated and false accusations are thrown at us. Those countries are sadly blindfolded. They fail to understand, or more precisely, refuse to understand.

The provinces of Papua and West Papua have undergone massive development and progress. During the past three years, 4,325 kilometres of roads, 30 new seaports and 7 new airports were built; 2.8 million Papuans have received free basic health care; 360,000 Papuan students have received free education, while the economy has grown at a rate of 9.21 per cent. All of that makes Papua and West Papua provinces the fastest growing regions in Indonesia.

The provinces of Papua and West Papua are an integral and sovereign part of Indonesia. They will always remain an integral part of Indonesia. Those countries have been foolishly deceived by individuals — I repeat, individuals — with a separatist agenda to exploit the issue of human rights. If human rights are at the heart of the issue, why were those concerns not raised in the appropriate forum, namely, the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of Indonesia at the United Nations Human Rights Council? If Indonesia had anything to hide concerning human rights issues in this day and age of open technology,

by now everybody would know if such accusations even existed.

Indonesia fails to understand how countries continue to support separatist activities in other countries. Is that a way to hide from one's own domestic problems? Do those countries have a perfect human rights track record? Obviously their motivation in this body is to dismember the territorial integrity of a sovereign and independent nation. Such actions are illegal, must not be condoned and violate the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We cannot let that happen. We cannot let it continue. Indonesia categorically rejects all accusations made by those countries and the individuals with separatist agendas operating behind them.

I would like to conclude by quoting an old Indonesian proverb: if you slap the water in a bucket, then be careful of the water splashing over your own face.

Ms. Tripathi (India): I take the floor to respond to the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, in exercise of the right of reply, on Saturday, 23 September (see A/72/PV.22).

The Permanent Representative of Pakistan in her statement yet again sought to divert attention from Pakistan's role as the hub of global terrorism. She did so by callously holding up a picture of an injured girl. It was a photograph of Rawya abu Jom'a, a girl from Palestine. The picture was taken on 22 July 2014 by an American photographer, Heidi Levine. The photograph was published by *The New York Times* on 24 March 2015, under the caption, "Conflict, Courage and Healing in Gaza". The Permanent Representative of Pakistan misled the Assembly by displaying that picture to spread falsehoods about India — a fake picture to push a completely false narrative.

In view of that cynical and misleading attempt by Pakistan, we are constrained to show the Assembly a photograph that reflects the real picture of pain inflicted by the nefarious designs of Pakistan on India. This is a real — not a fake — picture of Lieutenant Umar Fayaz, a young officer from the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. Umar Fayaz was kidnapped at a wedding celebration. He was brutally tortured and killed by Pakistan supported terrorists in May 2017. This is a true picture. It portrays a harsh and tragic reality — a picture of terrorism emanating from across our borders that the people of India, especially in the

state of Jammu and Kashmir, have to struggle with every day. This is the reality which the Permanent Representative of Pakistan sought to obfuscate. The true face of Pakistan is not hidden from anyone.

Ms. Hessa AlAteibi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I speak in exercise of my right to reply to the statement made by the representative of Iran.

First, the three islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb are an integral part of the territory of the United Arab Emirates. We categorically reject all of Iran's allegations regarding the three islands, which are occupied by Iran. I call on the Islamic Republic of Iran to act fairly and use peaceful means, especially the International Court of Justice, to resolve this problem.

Similarly, Iran cannot exploit the nuclear agreement to interfere in the internal affairs of other States in the region. The Islamic Republic of Iran pursues expansionist regional policies and seeks to export its problems and terrorism to other States while interfering in the internal affairs of Arab States. Iran is playing a negative role that has a destabilizing effect on our region. Any interference in our country by Iran is completely unacceptable, and we must denounce it.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is supporting terrorism, especially through Hizbullah in Lebanon and Syria, the Houthis in Yemen, and other groups in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. With regard to the coalition for the restoration of legitimacy in Iran, which the Iranian representative mentioned, it has played a fundamental role, through the United Nations and elsewhere, to ensure respect for legality and legitimacy in Iran. The coalition was set up for that purpose under the leadership of Saudi Arabia, and it has sought to save Yemen and uphold its sovereignty by rejecting any interference by Iran in other States. Moreover, only a political process will allow Yemen to emerge from its crisis, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2216 (2015) and the Gulf Cooperation Council resolutions.

Iran has helped the Houthis in Yemen through military and logistical means, while weapons and munitions have been sent illegally to that country, in complete violation of Security Council resolutions 2216 (2015) and 2231 (2015). Iran has sent weapons and munitions to Yemen, which is evidence of its expansionist role in the region and of the threat it poses to Yemeni civilians and the other neighbours of Yemen. Such weapons have been sent not just to the Houthis,

but also to other groups that are loyal to the former President Saleh.

We therefore call on the international community to take all steps necessary to ensure that Iran ceases all of these illegal measures. The coalition has always sought a political solution to the problem, but that solution has always been rebuffed by the Houthis.

Ms. Hamad (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): In response to the statement made by the representative of Iran, the entire world is aware of the actions taken by Iran in the past and the present, including interference in the internal affairs of others, aggression and support for terrorist groups and sectarian hatred. Iran must stop these serious human rights violations against its own people. The Iranian regime, through its expansionist and aggressive practices towards its neighbours, has clearly undermined peace and security in the region and the entire world.

We call on the international community to assume its responsibility to confront these hateful actions of Iran through its support for terrorism, intervention, interference in domestic affairs and aggression against the sovereignty and the territories of other countries. These actions have devastating effects on the people and countries in the region.

Mr. Usman (Pakistan): Pakistan would like to exercise its right of reply to the statement just made by the representative of India.

No matter how many times one repeats a lie, it does not and cannot hide the truth. The representative of India has once again chosen to divert the attention of the international community from the real issue: human life; human eyes — those of children and infants — that are blinded forever; and women who are raped and the elderly people killed every day under the reign of brutality unleashed by the Indian occupation forces in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The real issue is that India refuses to implement the Security Council resolutions.

Distracting the debate by displaying pictures has backfired. India's own people do not buy its argument. India, which kills and tortures innocent Kashmiris, is seeking to hide behind a photograph. This shows its desperation and a vain effort to conceal its guilt. Indian State terrorism has been amply documented by successive human rights reports of various international

organizations. There are thousands of pictures to prove Indian State terrorism.

Kashmiris will never be defeated. Kashmiris will take bullet after bullet and pellet after pellet, but they will never give up — just like Nelson Mandela never gave up, and just like the people of Palestine never gave up. India's diversionary tactics will not change the situation on the ground, which India has to answer for. It is its war crimes that India has to answer for. It is the call for legality, morality and conscience that India has to answer.

We ask the world body to act as the conscience of the world to ensure that no child is ever blinded again, that no woman is raped again, and that no elderly people are pushed to the ground and killed again. Kashmiris want freedom from the brutal Indian occupation; they will continue to rise again and again.

Let me remind my Indian colleague that racial superiority and religious dominance are part of the political ideology of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The former members of RSS who are now part of the Indian ruling elite are pursuing the same policy across India, and especially in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. They are now sitting by silently as hundreds of women are raped every day across India, minorities live on the fringes of society, Muslims and Christians are publicly lynched, and State protection is given to the perpetrators of the Samjhauta train terrorist attack.

To become a regional hegemon, Indian leaders are pursuing a policy of State-sponsored terrorism, funding and arming terrorist organizations such as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar to launch terrorist attacks inside Pakistan, killing hundreds of innocent women, men and children. India is churning out operatives of mayhem from its factories of terror — operatives like Commander Yadav, who are spreading terror and violence across Pakistan. We caught Yadav red-handed, and we will catch others and bring them to justice. It is not Pakistan, but India's animus against Pakistan that is its biggest enemy.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 8?

It was so decided.

Statement by the President

The President: What a week we have had — 196 statements have been delivered from this rostrum. This is the first time in 11 years that all Member States and observers have addressed the General Assembly. I have followed them closely, and many I listened to first-hand. When it was not possible for me to do so, I asked my team to send me a report directly after every statement was delivered. Thanks to their hard work, I have been able to listen to all. I will not attempt to summarize all 196 statements in this short speech. I would not be able to capture the diversity and complexity of the issues raised, and I would fail to replicate the passion and experience that was brought from nations, cities and homes to this rostrum.

I will do three things instead. First, I will focus on people. I have committed to doing that throughout the session, so today is no different. Secondly, I will review the priorities of the seventy-second session in the light of the input I have received from the members of the Assembly. Thirdly, I will look to the weeks and months ahead.

We have addressed many challenges over the past week. Speakers have talked about their impact on the countries of the world, and, importantly, they also talked about their impact on people. We have heard about people running from gunshots or the force of exploding bombs; people living for a week on the same amount some of us spend on a cup of coffee; people forced to make the decision between risking their lives to stay or risking their lives to flee; people wondering when the next hurricane would hit or if their village would be underwater in a few decades; people who are beginning to lose or have already lost hope in international peace processes; and people still waiting for justice and human rights to become a part of their daily reality.

These statements have not just focused on challenges, however. They have also spoken of solutions and the people who are working to find them. We have heard accounts of strength, resilience, partnerships and entrepreneurial spirit. And I want to thank everyone for placing people at the centre of the general debate. I am confident that we can do even more in the coming session. We can bring our discussions and actions closer to the people they most affect.

Now I want to focus on the seventy-second session in greater depth. I knew my own priorities before the

general debate began. What I did not know was how those present would respond to them. Let me now outline some of the messages I will be taking away from the statements delivered.

First, I have heard overwhelming support for the proposal to prioritize peace and prevention. Many speakers have reiterated the call of the Secretary-General for a surge in diplomacy to stop today's conflicts and have called for the United Nations to do more to prevent conflicts from breaking out. We must draw from national, regional and international experiences of mediation and conflict prevention. We must realign our approach to emphasize peace in what we now call "peace and security". There has also been stress on continued support to United Nations peacekeeping. Peace operations are doing a vital job. They work to protect civilians and support national actors to build and maintain peace. We have heard that some citizens have paid the ultimate price while serving under the United Nations flag. I want to thank them, on behalf of the General Assembly, for their ongoing commitment.

Secondly, speakers have talked about the needs of people all over the world and expressed a vision in which human rights, gender equality and the rule of law and norms reign. Today, unfortunately, they often remain the exceptions. So, we have more work to do in realizing that vision. I have also heard calls for us to look beyond the labels of "refugee" or "migrant" to simply see people. Many have told us about the work being done for those people and to support for the States and communities hosting them. Additionally, many have stressed the need for a comprehensive global framework.

Thirdly, speakers have reminded us of all of the promises we have made to the people and the planet. Throughout the week, we have listened to accounts of the work being done to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. Some have also made clear that climate change has become a matter of life or death for people, ecosystems, ways of life and even entire countries. It has therefore been heartening to witness a major show of support for the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in this Hall. Finally, speakers have reaffirmed their commitment to the United Nations and to one another by saying that we are stronger together in a system based on dialogue and multilateralism, and stressed that any alternative would risk repeating the mistakes of history.

But many have also acknowledged two things. The first is that the world is changing. Those changes are for both good and bad, and are happening at a fast pace. The second is that the United Nations must do more to adapt to that change. Over the coming session, we will hear more ideas and positions on how that should happen. I am committed to ensuring that our discussions are as open, inclusive and transparent as possible.

I want to pause here to speak frankly. Not all of the messages delivered in the general debate have been positive. Many of them have contained criticisms of other countries or of the United Nations. But that is part of the package. It is the right of the members of the Assembly to do that. And regardless of the size, population or economy of the countries they represent, all delegations have access to the same platform for the same amount of time. They can speak freely, without censorship. We must remember that differences in unilateral positions do not prevent multilateral agreement. They might give us more work to do. Our negotiations may be more difficult, but they can also make the outcome stronger. I therefore want to embrace both the consensus and the contention that have been part of this year's general debate.

The only thing left to do is to look ahead. The seventy-second session will involve milestones. Some of them are already on the calendar, such as the high-level event on sustaining peace, in April, and the adoption of global compacts related to migrants and refugees in September. Already this week, the General Assembly will convene the high-level meeting on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. That shows our readiness to follow up on mandates inherited from previous sessions from an early stage. I am sure that other major events will happen throughout the year, in response to the initiative of Member States or in reaction to events happening around the world. Additionally, the work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly will soon begin. All six Committees are important tools for multilateralism. We should make use of them.

Before I conclude, I want to thank all those who have contributed to the general debate of the seventy-second session. I thank the representatives of Member States and observers for standing up here and outlining their visions. I want to acknowledge the Vice-Presidents for their able chairing on my behalf.

I also want to thank everyone who has worked to ensure the smooth running of the debate and the security of all participating in it, and in particular our colleagues in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. Those people have not stood on the podium, but we would not be here without all of the work they have done, out of the spotlight and behind the scenes. I believe they deserve our applause.

I am sure that many of the delegations here today are breathing a sigh of relief. High-level representatives have returned to their capitals. Schedules no longer contain back-to-back meetings and events. Most people probably deserve a break, but those whom we all represent — the people I have talked about today — need us to do the opposite. They need us to focus on action, now more than ever. So let us get to work.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.